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Research Project

*Exploring the Use of Collaborative Learning Techniques to
Enhance Interpersonal Intelligence*

Table of Contents

<i>Abstract</i>	2
<i>Introduction</i>	2
<i>Purpose of Research</i>	2
<i>Background to The Problem</i>	2
<i>Formulation of The Problem</i>	2
<i>Justification of The Problem</i>	3
<i>Research Questions</i>	3
<i>Research Objectives</i>	3
<i>Literature Review</i>	4
<i>Theoretical Framework</i>	4
<i>Key Definitions</i>	5
<i>Research Methodology</i>	6
<i>Research Paradigm/ World View</i>	6
<i>Quantitative Research</i>	6
<i>Research Design</i>	7
<i>Questionnaire as A Data Collection Method</i>	7
<i>Data Analysis Method</i>	7
<i>Description of The Population and Sampling</i>	8
<i>Population</i>	8
<i>Sampling Method and Size</i>	8
<i>Ethical Considerations, Validity and Reliability</i>	9
<i>Limitation of The Study</i>	10
<i>Results and Findings</i>	10
<i>Recommendations</i>	116
<i>Conclusion</i>	17
<i>Bibliography</i>	18
<i>Appendix A: Questionnaire</i>	21

Abstract

The research project explores the effects of collaborative teaching and learning methods have upon interpersonal intelligence, primarily focusing on the implementation of tasks and activities in a participatory environment. Research falls under the paradigm of post positivism, as the intention is to explore and initiate a degree of intended change amongst respondents. The research is quantitative in nature, having data in the form of responses generated through survey-based questionnaires using Likert scale based questioning techniques. Findings reflect that respondents share generally positive sentiments towards the activities at hand, often agreeing with the notion that collaborative learning techniques provided a better understanding of both the curriculum at hand and towards others. These findings in conjunction with an analysis substantiates the notions of theorists that collaborative learning techniques allows for an enhancement of interpersonal intelligence.

Introduction

Purpose of Research

The objective of this research is to explore the usage of collaborative learning strategies in the higher educational context and its effect upon interpersonal intelligence amongst students.

Background to the Problem

Syed et al. (2014) identifies a distinct connection between a student's interpersonal skills and progression in term of educational development. The inability to relate and empathise with others leads to a limited sense of understanding and the declination of emotional intelligence that is essentially needed beyond the higher educational context. Hirsh (2012) states that higher education graduates have the theoretical and practical capacity to function in external environments, however they are not accustomed to ethics and professionalism that is needed in the working environment and the necessary skills needed in work related interactions with one another.

Teaching and learning should encompass multiple cognitive enhancement methods, improving one's overall levels of intelligence (Hirsh, 2012). One of the intelligences seen as being neglected because of traditionalist means of teaching and learning is that of Interpersonal intelligence. Interpersonal intelligence is the ability to interpret one's emotional well-being and is a skill that is needed for both educational and social purposes (Armstrong, 1994). Traditional teaching methods such as non – participatory seminars provide a platform for the dissemination of information, but does not allow for active engagement amongst students whom may differ in learning styles (Stanford, 2003). Therefore, it is encouraged that educators prioritise the promotion of collaborative learning techniques that would generate intellectual stimulation that encourages interpersonal intelligence (Jain et al, 2016).

Formulation of the Problem

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Justification of the Problem

Traditionalist methods of educational practices have become a focal point of criticism and evaluation in relation to higher education practices. Le Grange (2006) argues the need to shift from the educator – centred philosophical understandings towards teaching and learning that is more inclusive. Learning should encompass individualistic learning experiences as opposed to having a sole reliance upon educator-based means of facilitating knowledge through educational practices (Le Grange, 2006). Modern standards of teaching and learning prioritise educator-based educational practices, with educators becoming sole providers of knowledge with students becoming reliant consumers than active contributors and critical thinkers (Hennessey & McNamara, 2013). The recent #feesmustfall campaign had severely affected upon the educational practices of students in terms of access to lectures and content (Essop, 2016). With lectures previously being postponed and turmoil amongst campuses across the country, students were required to engage with curriculum on an independent level. This may have presented a challenge in students catering to individual educational needs, not having a discursive platform for teaching and learning practices, thus resorting to curriculum based absorption of information. In essence, having tertiary institutions concentrate on educator-centred approaches, teaching and learning practices has diminished the role of collaborative learning, with students losing rather than enhancing essential skills needed for personal, social and professional growth (Essop, 2016). The aim of this research is to determine in what way this problem can be overcome, or student engagement promoted through the application of a collaborative teaching strategy to encourage interpersonal intelligence development.

Research Questions

Research questions essentially serve as a statement to which the phenomenon is based within the paradigm of broad based inquiry, concentrating towards specific aims that are in alignment to the research at hand (Cuba, 1997). Research questions provide guidance towards the research at hand, pinpointing areas of focus that allow for a more comprehensive structure to which research is conducted (Cuba, 1997). The proposed research questions are as follows:

1. Is collaborative teaching and learning practices effective towards enhancing interpersonal intelligence amongst students?
2. Which of the three collaborative teaching methods supports intrapersonal intelligence awareness most?

Research Objectives

The research at hand centres on collaborative learning and interpersonal intelligence to explore teaching and learning methods that utilise dynamically inclined and multi-faceted sensory resources (auditory, visual, tactile, and kinaesthetic) and activities that inspire participatory learning and the effect such methods of academic engagement have upon interpersonal engagement (Jain et al. 2016). This research explores the degree of empathy students have towards one another and emotional intelligence that constitute developed interpersonal skills. Not only does the proposed research attempt to demonstrate the relationship between interpersonal intelligence and collaborative learning in successive teaching and learning, but also encourage and promote a student-centred method involving several intellectually based, cooperative and interactive learning strategies (Jain et al. 2016). The collaborative teaching and learning methods focus on four categories that are significant

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towards student potential and the development of graduate competencies within the field of Public Relations, namely discussion, reciprocal teaching, writing and problem solving (Barkley, Cross & Major, 2005). The three methods selected are based on a constructive level, with one based in class for a short amount of time, one out of class and one for the duration of the session. The suggested methods are teamwork based case studies for the duration of a session, a dyadic essay and editing activity as an out of class activity and a think-pair-share activity for a short duration of a session to promote group discussions (Barkley, Cross & Major, 2005).

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

Gardner (1983) states that effective learning does not pertain to a singular form of knowledge acquisition but rather knowledge is attained through various mediums and means, using a multitude of intelligences to make sense of the world and to understand holistically. Bernard (2009) suggests that the multiple intelligence has become a systemic approach in understanding the educational system as a platform for flexibility to develop one's cognitive functioning. One or many intelligences may be fully functional in attaining perceptual understanding, with there being nine key dimensions of intelligence (namely naturalistic, musical, logical – mathematical, existential, bodily – kinaesthetic, linguistic, spatial, interpersonal and intrapersonal). The enhancement of interpersonal intelligence should be a necessary development of tertiary students, as it can be seen to influence other factors pertinent to cognitive development such as self-efficacy, assertiveness and emotional intelligence (Bandura, 2001).

Goldman and Schmalz (2003) state that each of the intelligences one uses to attain knowledge plays a vital role towards professions those individuals choose and have the capacity to efficiently perform. It can be argued that tertiary educational systems prioritize the functioning of two intelligences, namely logical – mathematical and verbal linguistic intelligences as means of assessment, regulation and facilitating educational discourse (Stanford, 2003). As such, education is often performance based, driven by “strategic performance indicators of excellence”, considered to be a representation of the academic input in relation to the performance based output of educational institutions (Le Grange, 2006: p368). Many intelligences that need development, and are often means to which students ascertain knowledge, are neglected to accommodate the more traditional forms of educational discourse. The prioritization of interpersonal intelligence stems from the social constructivist approach, which suggests that personal interactions constitute as a means of learning and development (Crawford, 1996).

Collaborative learning is a tool that is used to develop one's interpersonal skills through having carefully planned and monitored activities that promote constant participation and active contributions amongst students, formulating a designation of roles that provide a degree of accountability towards academic engagement, becoming creators of teaching and learning (Abrami et al, 1995). In a collaborative classroom, personal relations and intricate conversations are crucial to successful academic progression in an educational environment (Shachar & Sharan, 1994). Teamwork and continuous participation are a pre-requisite for the effective usage of collaborative learning to enhance teaching and learning practices (Davis, 2012). Constructive tasks are needed for collaborative

learning, as a differentiation in participation encourages diversity, which is celebrated and valued as a unique learning experience amongst students (Abrami et al, 1995).

The implementation of collaborative learning strategies has crucial importance towards the personal, social and cognitive well-being of a student. Davis (2012) encourages collaborative learning as a promotion towards a classroom culture that emphasizes knowledge that is collective and contextual in nature. Collaborative learning can be seen as a method to not only promote cohesive teaching and learning practices, but also to enhance “student’s resilience”, being the ability to reflect and evaluate practices of knowledge under dynamic circumstances (Davis 2012). Collaborative learning provides a multitude of perspectives and a variety of understandings to which students may draw upon, to which participation and self – monitoring is crucial towards progressive understanding, with students acquiring knowledge through active engagement (Bloxham & Boyd, 2009). One could suggest that the usage of collaborative learning techniques strongly encourages students to actively participate in unison towards a common goal, having a fair degree of empathy and understanding towards one another, thus promoting interpersonal intelligence (Davis, 2012).

The selected methods of collaborative learning seek to promote a degree of interaction that encourages higher order thinking amongst students whilst enhancing interpersonal relations by students supporting one another in their educational activities and overall engagement (Barkley, Cross & Major, 2005). The think – pair – share method is when the educator presents information to students, requests them to make notes and to understand what has been presented, and then to discuss their understandings amongst their peers. Such a method prompts a high degree of participation in encouraging students to exchange their understanding to allow for educational progression (Barkley, Cross & Major, 2005). Such a method utilizes discussions amongst students, encouraging interpersonal relations to form a deeper level of understanding (Van Gundy, 2005). An encouragement of higher order thinking amongst students can be achieved through dyadic essays, promoting complex writing techniques through collaborative discovery rather than individualistic interpretation (Rockler, 1998). A dyadic essay is the designation of a topic to pairs or groups of students, requesting a few to work on the response and the others to edit the response according to their understanding (Van Gundy, 2005). Having a method that directly initiates team based efforts dictate a need for cooperative understanding and mutual outcomes to be attained by all students (Rockler, 1998). Team based case studies allows for students to engage with reality-based situations, having a more comprehensive manner towards practical application (Killen, 2015). Furthermore, case studies that require group participation presents a platform for students to have exposure to such cases, broadening their understanding and targeting many intelligences whilst promoting new teaching and learning strategies (Meyer & Wittrock, 2006). Such a method creates a platform for participative problem-solving skills (Meyer & Wittrock, 2006).

Key Definitions

Interpersonal Intelligence – “capacity to detect and respond appropriately to the moods, motivations and desires of others” (Armstrong, 2010).

Collaborative learning – An interactive and integrative teaching and learning method, involving a cluster of students towards a single task / goal (Abrami et al, 1995).

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Research Methodology

Research Paradigm/ World View

Research was conducted within the paradigm of post – positivism, being the correlation between scientific and logical reasoning to form ideologies and analysis (Phillips & Burbules, 2000). Having a multifaceted scientific approach to one's research, the research conducted can be considered as the post-positivism approach in not relying upon a singular method of observation and analysis in order to avoid possible errors about undertaking a positivist approach to educational research (Phillips & Burbules, 2000). In essence, the post – positivism approach to educational research allows for a degree of interaction between the researcher and participants that fosters objective knowledge formulated through social behaviour (Willis, 2007). This fundamental quality of post – positivism is equivocal to the nature of research, being the observation and analysis of participants within a social context as a means of furthering one's intelligence. In having a nature of study as dynamic as the study of interpersonal intelligence based on collaborative teaching techniques, there is a need for methodology that recognizes the interactions between researchers and participants as a core to educational research whilst providing a research based paradigm of objectivity, validity and reliability, which is encompassed in the post – positivism paradigm of research (Phillip & Burbules, 2000).

Quantitative Research

Based on familiarity of the researcher in the space of teaching and learning and the purpose of the proposed research being for innovative expansions of educational practices for a deeper level of understanding, the proposed research would fall under the exploratory aim. Whilst similar research has been conducted towards the topics at hand, it can be considered as a process of innovation and discovery based on the exploration into testing new methods amongst students whom are new to the tertiary education system (Du Plooy, 2006). The clearly defined aim of the proposed research, being to explore the usage of collaborative learning techniques to enhance interpersonal intelligence, provide a quantitative framework to which two phenomena are aligned, with interpersonal intelligence being a predicted outcome or consequence of collaborative learning (O' Leary, 2004). As a pertinent factor to exploratory research, this research project contains designs, analysis and evaluations that cannot be generalized across all educational and academic platforms (Koonin in Du – Plooy Cilliers, et al. 2014).

The number of respondents, being relatively small would best suit quantitative research in having a more concise manner of gathering, analysing and interpreting data in an attempt to formulate relationships between collaborative research and interpersonal intelligence (Khan in Du Plooy – Cilliers et al. 2014). The segmented nature to which the research focuses on (being a sample of Public Relations students of a tertiary level) allows for quantitative research in limiting the applicability of research, narrowing the scope to which research is undertaken (Sukamolson, 2007). In having quantitative research, data that is collected remains objective in nature, demonstrating that any changes experienced by participants results in the experiment conducted and stimulus presented as opposed to direct influence by researchers in using experimental designs and measurement instruments such as the Likert scale (Du Plooy - Cilliers in Du Plooy – Cilliers et al. 2014, p290).

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Research Design

Considering the nature of research being quantitative, questionnaire based surveys were implemented, with the survey design being cross – sectional in nature. The reason behind this choice is due to research being conducted, interpreted and analysed within a particular period (Maree, 2007). Furthermore, data was collected at a singular point in time, needing only one set of data collection to serve the purpose of the proposed research (Du Plooy – Cilliers & Cronje in Du Plooy – Cilliers et al. 2014). The type of survey that shall be utilised is that of a “group administration” survey, being the sampled population fill out a questionnaire “at the same time during one session” (Du Plooy – Cilliers & Cronje in Du Plooy – Cilliers et al. 2014, p151). A Likert scale was used in the formulation of survey in having a measurement tool that reflects the attitudes of participants towards the usage of collaborative learning to enhance interpersonal intelligence. The implementation of a Likert scale allows for the scoring of items to reflect positive and negative attitudes would be beneficial in the interpretation of results (Du Plooy – Cilliers & Cronje in Du Plooy – Cilliers et al. 2014).

Questionnaire as a Data Collection Method

As previously mentioned, a group administration survey shall be used for the purposes of data collection, allowing for a variation of opinions, promoting individualized responses with no added pressure associated to personal interviews (Du Plooy – Cilliers & Cronje in Du Plooy – Cilliers et al. 2014). The usage of group administration surveys allows for purposeful data collection methods, having a singular response mechanism that does not deviate from the research at hand (Maree, 2007). The group-administered survey would be questionnaire based, allowing for a combination of open and close ended questions, prompting participants to provide more comprehensive responses that can be interpreted. With regards to open ended questions that will be used, it is best to generate questions that provide short answers, allowing for a substantiation of results through a comparison of the responses from the short answer open ended questions to the results of the Likert scale based close – ended questions (Oppenheim, 1992). Specific open-ended questions that anticipate responses of a factual nature would prove beneficial to the research at hand, but cannot be solely used for the purposes of analysis due to its expected variance (Oppenheim, 1992). Likert scale based close – ended will be predominantly used in research as a measurement of latent constructs (characteristics that have no concrete or standardized means of measurement; that being the attitude and opinions of respondents) (Converse and Presser, 1986).

Data Analysis Method

The analysis method was a direct and tabulated system linking the responses generated to the questions at hand. In essence, the frequency of responses can be seen as a determinant of the perceptions, attitudes and behaviour towards interpersonal intelligence and the correlation to collaborative learning techniques. Therefore, the most “popular” or most selected option amongst respondents based on each question will be used to either strengthen or diminish the notion that collaborative learning techniques enhances interpersonal intelligence.

Description of the Population and Sampling

Population

The population chosen would be first year tertiary students whom are studying towards a three-year diploma in Public Relations. Bearing this in mind, the discipline of humanities requires understanding that is experiential in nature, relying upon personal and social knowledge as foundational tools to expand knowledge which can assist in addressing issues and promoting a multitude of intelligences, aptitudes and skills through a diversification of understanding (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2009). One must also consider the generational characteristics to which students of the 21st century is attributed towards.

Millennial students are a term coined to describe students of the current era, where students have more access to information to which understanding is enhanced rather than established, allowing for educational discourse through social and collaborative practices, with students utilising the environment and resources as a source for knowledge (Howe & Strauss, 2003). Learning by millennial students can be done in many ways, encouraging participation and creation, often multitasking to find the best method, which works to its optimal efficiency (Starlink, 2004, p. 10-11). The reason as to why this population was chosen is as opposed to second or third year students is due to the unfamiliarity students would have with one another, which may provide a more concise level of interpretation towards the degree of influence collaborative learning has upon interpersonal intelligence if students have limited interpersonal relationships.

Sampling Method and Size

Based on the purpose of research being orientated towards public relations students, the population reflects the purpose. Based on the number of students (which is difficult to determine currently as this study will only be undertaken in the next year), a 10% sample will be taken from the number of students registered to the Public Relations programme. The reasoning behind sampling would be to reduce time spent on analysing due to the constrained time period to which the proposed research would be undertaken and “drawing accurate conclusions” based on having a sample that is in accordance to the population, being “sufficiently representative” (Khan in Du Plooy – Cilliers et al. 2014, p210).

The research itself requires a population that is accessible based on the nature of research being kinaesthetically orientated, prioritizing interactions between the researcher / educator and students (Pascoe in Du Plooy Cilliers et al. 2014). The specification of population can be “purposive selection”, which would fall under the spectrum of non – probability sampling (Doherty, M. 1994, p21). The aim of this research is to explore changes that collaborative learning would have on Public Relations students and not to generalise findings to other programmes of study, allowing for a more “in depth understanding” of the topic at hand (Pascoe in Du Plooy Cilliers et al. 2014, p137).

Feasibility of Study and Anticipated Contributions

The only costs generated are the usage of props and other material for collaborative teaching and learning methods. The costs of said materials are relatively inexpensive and were an expense of the researcher.

Ethical Considerations, Validity and Reliability

As a researcher, an ethical code of conduct was followed, concentrating on the core principles of truthfulness, objectivity, avoiding harm and gross negligence (Seeman, 2015). Furthermore, all research conducted shall be undertaken in relation to the best interests of the participants, causing no emotional distress through using sensitive and personal information, nor causing any physical harm or potential to generate hostility towards the researcher and others (Louw in Du – Plooy Cilliers et al, 2014).

All students whom are participating and contributing towards the research were given formal documentation to which they provided their consent in a written format (Louw in Du – Plooy Cilliers et al, 2014). The document indicates that participation to the research at hand is solely on a voluntary basis, with signed acknowledgement by students confirming agreement rather than compliance (Seeman, 2015). Confidentiality was ensured in disregarding any personal information for the purposes of research, which is especially applicable with regards to having the identities of participants protected (Louw in Du – Plooy Cilliers et al, 2014). The formal document shall state that at no point in time will the names of the participants be used in the research paper at hand.

There is a variety of means and methods to test reliability, however for the purposes of this research, the type of reliability that was tested is that of inter – rater or inter – coder, being the measurement of the performance based on participants (Koonin in Du – Plooy Cilliers et al, 2014). The reasoning behind using inter – rater type of reliability acknowledges the differentiation in participants, but having a consistency in the method of data collection and research. If one were to automatically assume that respondents whom are similar in some degree would produce results of a similar nature, the implementation of inter – rater reliability validates the findings if the participants pertaining to the research at hand (being 1st year public relations students) generate similar responses with regards to collaborative learning and its enhancement of interpersonal intelligence (Koonin in Du – Plooy Cilliers et al, 2014).

For the purpose of research and quality assurance, content validity was undertaken to essentially determine the degree to which the questionnaire used measure what the researcher wishes to achieve and if it would lead to the desired outcomes of the research (Shuttleworth, 2015). Furthermore, content validity is crucial in determining the questionnaire as a representation of research as a whole (Koonin in Du – Plooy Cilliers et al, 2014). Internal validity also accommodates to errors that may have occurred in the results phase of the research, having contingency plans and methods if such errors were to occur (Koonin in Du – Plooy Cilliers et al, 2014). Validity in quantitative research also determines the credibility of research, which can be substantiated using random sampling methods (Koonin in Du – Plooy Cilliers et al, 2014).

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Limitation of the Study

The scope of the research study presents a limitation concerning time constraints and the nature of research itself. The scope of relevance regarding the research at hand pertains to the enhancement of interpersonal intelligence amongst 1st year Public Relations students using collaborative learning techniques. Research conducted does deviate from the proposed outcomes of the research by including information that is deemed unnecessary (Enslin in Du – Plooy Cilliers et al, 2014). Furthermore, the period from which research is conducted to its finalization leaves a short period, limiting the amount of information presented, narrowing and refining research to the specified outcomes listed above (Enslin in Du – Plooy Cilliers et al, 2014).

Results and Findings

The surveys generated specifically required respondents to present their views and opinions on each activity. The first section specifically focused on respondents' views and opinions on the collaborative learning techniques, providing commentary to which they were either in agreement with or in disagreement. The second section focused on respondents' views and opinions on the effects of said activities on interpersonal intelligence. Respondents were required to rate the effectiveness of collaborative learning techniques, with specific interest towards the manner to which the tasks contribute towards the interpersonal intelligence through participatory educational stimulation (Meyer & Wittrock, 2006). The questions presented to respondents are aligned to both the potential benefits of collaborative learning techniques and key qualities associated to the field of Public Relations (being writing skills, problem solving skills, communication and empathy) which further substantiate the effect of collaborative learning techniques upon one's interpersonal intelligence (Howe & Strauss, 2003). The third section provided a platform for qualitative feedback in enabling respondents to comment on the activities at hand, stating their preferences and reasons. The following sections below shall highlight each section through tabulated results and analysis.

Section A

The tables below tabulate the frequency of responses based on the questions presented per activity:

Table 1: Number of Respondents Per Question

Questions	Number of Responses				
Question 1: Teamwork – Based Case Study Activity	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Q1.1. Completing this assessment with others provided an effective platform for engaging with my peers	3	7	2	0	0
Q1.2. I felt more comfortable completing this assessment with others	5	7	0	0	0
Q1.3. Participation amongst all group members were equal	4	7	0	1	0
Q1.4. Completing this assessment with others has provided me with a better understanding of my peers with regards to their emotions and behaviour.	8	4	0	0	0
Q1.5. In future, I would feel comfortable completing assessments of a similar nature in a group-based effort	6	6	0	0	0
Q1.6. I now have a more positive outlook towards the module after completing the assessments.	4	8	0	0	0

Analysis:

The responses in relation to Question 1 reflect strongly in favour of teamwork based activities which both in terms of participation and understanding of the content as a whole. The responses generated reflect a strong preference towards group based activities that incorporate academic engagement in a physical form (in this instance, being the case studies). Having a mutual instrument of teaching and learning used in participation provided “common ground” for respondents, allowing for more structured means of participation as opposed to the free-flowing systems in place for Activity 4 (Think – Pair – Share).

Questions	Number of Responses				
Question 2: Dyadic Essay Activity	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Q2.1. Completing this assessment with others provided an effective platform for engaging with my peers	3	9	0	0	0
Q2.2. I felt more comfortable completing this assessment with others	8	4	0	0	0
Q2.3. Participation amongst all group members were equal	8	3	1	0	0
Q2.4. Completing this assessment with others has provided me with a better understanding of my peers with regards to their emotions and behaviour.	2	8	1	1	0
Q2.5. In future, I would feel comfortable completing assessments of a similar nature in a group-based effort	4	8	0	0	0
Q2.6. I now have a more positive outlook towards the module after completing the assessments.	5	6	1	0	0

Table 2: Number of Respondents Per Question

Analysis:

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The choice for respondents to choose their partners for the activity above provided a degree of comfort and familiarity to which participation was more effective. Participation between two individuals led to more active contributions made, however the choice of partners effects the dynamics to which the task could be completed, which should be considered in further research of a similar nature.

Questions	Number of Responses				
Question 3: Collaborative Editing Activity	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Q3.1. Completing this assessment with others provided an effective platform for engaging with my peers	3	7	1	1	0
Q3.2. I felt more comfortable completing this assessment with others	2	7	0	2	1
Q3.3. Participation amongst all group members were equal	2	6	1	2	0
Q3.4. Completing this assessment with others has provided me with a better understanding of my peers with regards to their emotions and behaviour.	4	4	0	2	1
Q3.5. In future, I would feel comfortable completing assessments of a similar nature in a group-based effort	4	6	1	1	0
Q3.6. I now have a more positive outlook towards the module after completing the assessments.	4	6	2	0	0

Table 3: Number of Respondents per Question

Analysis

Question 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4 generated the strongest amount of unfavourable responses in comparison with the other questions. Potential reasons for this is the notion of unequal participation amongst members when confined to only two participants. Whilst some groups may have found cohesion in collaborative engagement, other groups may have had difficulty in expressing themselves in the presence of domineering group members.

Questions	Number of Responses				
Question 4: Think – Pair – Share Activity	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Q4.1. Completing this assessment with others provided an effective platform for engaging with my peers	3	6	1	1	0
Q4.2. I felt more comfortable completing this assessment with others	6	5	1	0	0
Q4.3. Participation amongst all group members were equal	5	6	0	1	0
Q4.4. Completing this assessment with others has provided me with a better understanding of my peers with regards to their emotions and behaviour.	4	8	0	0	0
Q4.5. In future, I would feel comfortable completing assessments of a similar nature in a group-based effort	5	6	1	1	0
Q4.6. I now have a more positive outlook towards the module after completing the assessments.	4	6	1	1	0

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Table 4: Number of Respondents Per Question

Findings:

The table above reflects the sentiments shared by respondents in relation to a purely interactive space of educational engagement. Whilst other activities had the liberty of having respondents completing activities in pairs or groups, the Think – Pair – Share activity required participation from all respondents, being an undefined and immersive space for educational practices. Whilst the respondents have indicated positive opinions in having selected options mostly within the strongly agree or agree choices, the activity itself needs to be controlled in a more cohesive manner as participation could be seen as being from selective respondents as opposed to all in attendance.

Overall Findings:

Collaborative learning techniques have benefitted students in ascertaining a deeper level of understanding towards the tasks at hand, providing a more holistic form of participatory engagement, which can be refined in more clear definition and regulation of roles and responsibilities to ensure equal participation amongst students (Meyer & Wittrock, 2006). The results generated reflect positive reactions amongst respondents regarding the implementation of collaborative learning techniques as a platform for integrative understanding, as a majority of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed to having a better understanding and more positive outlook towards the module and curriculum at hand. This substantiates previously mentioned notions of collaborative learning being a space for educational discourse, which serves to further understanding through interaction (Barkley, Cross & Major, 2005).

Section B

The tables below display the frequency of responses based on the questions presented per activity with regards to the effects of collaborative learning techniques upon interpersonal intelligence:

Questions	Number of Responses				
Question 5: Teamwork – Based Case Study Activity	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
5.1. Provided me with a better understanding of the module	3	9	0	0	0
5.2. Improved my writing abilities	2	9	1	0	0
5.3. Made problem – solving easier	5	7	0	0	0
5.4. Improved my communication methods with others	4	7	0	1	0
5.5. Provided me with insightful feedback through communicating with others	3	8	1	0	0
5.6. Provided a sense of “team spirit”	3	8	0	1	0
5.7. Created a more meaningful level of understanding	5	7	0	0	0

Table 5: Number of Respondents Per Question

Analysis:

As expressed in the previous section, a majority of responded were in favour of the comments provided, either being in agreement of strong agreement with the ideologies presented. Responses of interest are Q5.1. and Q5.7. The dominant responses pertinent to the categories of agree or

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strongly agree to both categories substantiate the ideology of educational discourse needing a collaborative platform for engagement rather than isolated teaching and learning methods (Meyer & Wittrock, 2006).

Questions	Number of Responses				
Question 6: Dyadic Essay Activity	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
6.1. Provided me with a better understanding of the module	4	7	1	0	0
6.2. Improved my writing abilities	4	7	1	0	0
6.3. Made problem – solving easier	4	8	0	0	0
6.4. Improved my communication methods with others	3	7	0	2	0
6.5. Provided me with insightful feedback through communicating with others	4	6	1	1	0
6.6. Provided a sense of “team spirit”	3	7	1	0	1
6.7. Created a more meaningful level of understanding	4	8	0	0	0

Table 6: Number of Respondents Per Question

Analysis:

Once more, the findings of Q6 reflect that in Q2, in having mixed results that can be attributed to the functioning and dynamics of the pairs associated. It can be argued that strong interpersonal relations and equal levels of participation are reflected in respondents whom selected choices in favour of the statements provided whilst unequal participation and authoritative pair dynamics led to other respondents being neutral or not in favour towards the statements provided.

Questions	Number of Responses				
Question 7: Collaborative Editing Activity	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
7.1. Provided me with a better understanding of the module	4	8	0	0	0
7.2. Improved my writing abilities	4	7	1	0	0
7.3. Made problem – solving easier	5	7	0	0	0
7.4. Improved my communication methods with others	3	5	2	1	1
7.5. Provided me with insightful feedback through communicating with others	3	7	1	1	0
7.6. Provided a sense of “team spirit”	2	7	2	0	1
7.7. Created a more meaningful level of understanding	5	7	0	0	0

Table 7: Number of Respondents Per Question

Analysis:

The implementation of the collaborative essay editing activity needs restructuring as once more, this question presented the most responses either being neutral or in disagreement with the statements provided.

Questions	Number of Responses				
Question 8: Think – Pair – Share Activity	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

[Type here]

8.1. Provided me with a better understanding of the module	5	7	0	0	0
8.2. Improved my writing abilities	4	8	0	0	0
8.3. Made problem – solving easier	6	6	0	0	0
8.4. Improved my communication methods with others	4	7	1	0	0
8.5. Provided me with insightful feedback through communicating with others	4	7	1	0	0
8.6. Provided a sense of “team spirit”	3	8	1	0	0
8.7. Created a more meaningful level of understanding	5	7	0	0	0

Table 8: Number of Respondents Per Question

Overall Findings:

The strongest responses were recorded for question 5.1; 6.1; 7.1 and 8.1 (The task provided me with a better understanding of the module), with 100% of all participants either agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement at hand. The same can be said for questions 5.7; 6.7; 7.7 and 8.7 (The task at hand created a more meaningful level of understanding). The holistically favourable responses represent a key notion of collaborative learning techniques in providing alternative and dynamic means of understanding educational practices, thus creating knowledge and ideologies that is unique to the student (Davis, 2012). Questions 5.4; 7.4 and 8.4 generated unfavourable responses, with 8% of respondents disagreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement provided. This could be interpreted as the respondent (1 of the 12) not being as inclusive to the tasks at hand, with a general consensus amongst participants not being reached as one had not provided ample communication to the topics at hand. What is also of interest is the dominantly positive responses pertaining to question 8.3. Having such favourable impressions amongst respondents substantiate the notion of problem-solving being enhanced through interpersonal communication and collaborative learning, being a key skill needed in the workplace in consideration to the field of Public Relations.

Section C

The chart below serves as a compilation of results generated. The section required respondents to select their most preferred activity and to provide reasoning for their choices.

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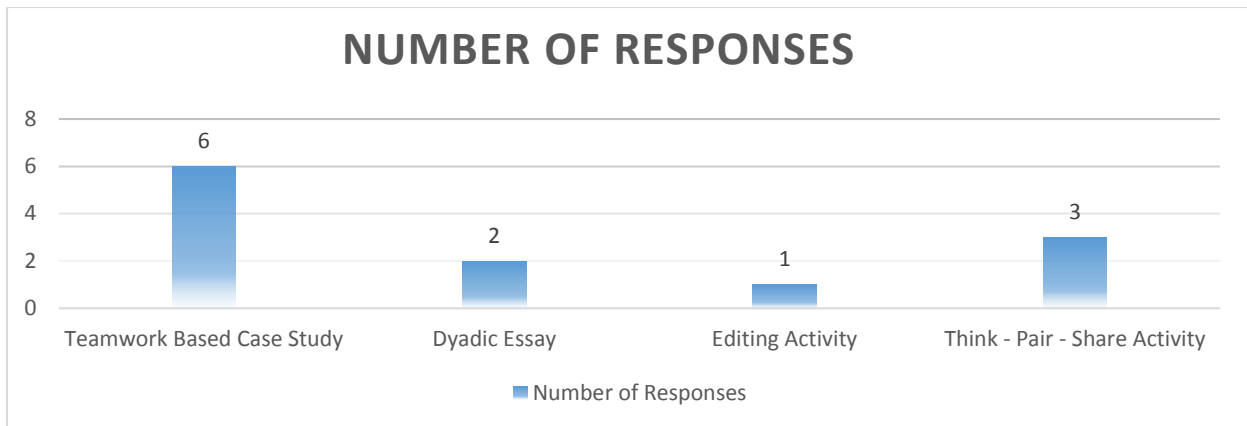


Figure 1: Number of Respondents Per Activity

Based on the answers provided, participants felt more comfortable in an interactive space with numerous participants, allowing for enhanced understanding through active engagement. The premise of open communication methods and the sharing of ideologies was strongly represented amongst the answers generated for the Teamwork Based Essay and the Think – Pair – Share activity. The notions of “team spirit” and “self-confidence” were also mentioned amongst participants. Sharing such reflections reinforces the qualities inherent in collaborative learning techniques, being an interactive space designed to encourage participation, thus furthering one’s interpersonal intelligence (Abrami et al, 1995).

Recommendations

The conduction of the collaborative learning techniques needs a strategic plan as evident by the responses associated to the Teamwork based collaborative essay editing activity. Having unequal participation amongst groups diminished the nature of the research at hand, with respondents in agreement with either the most dominant member or not participating to their optimum level. A method of improvement could be the replacement of said activity with one that is more kinaesthetically inclined such as a presentation or debates, which serves to not only allow for holistic engagement but also provides a platform for the enhancement of verbal communication, being a key skill within the field of Public Relations.

Upon reviewing the surveys, one of the strongest outcomes was the perception amongst a minority of participants in feeling unequal in participation and unwilling to share on the premise of assumedly predisposed ethnocentrism (Bloxxham & Boyd, 2009). A method to encourage equal levels of participation is the adoption of student accountability practices, such as logsheets that reflect the amount of contributions made per group member (Bloxxham & Boyd, 2009). Furthermore, activities that require participation on multiple levels (such as group presentations) would serve to empower students whom may feel unequal in participation.

Further research of a similar nature can be extended beyond the field of Public Relations, exploring the effects of collaborative learning techniques in other fields such as Information Technology and

[Type here]

Travel and Tourism students. Research of a similar nature can also be conducted with a larger group of students, as having a more diversified sample size may substantiate findings produced currently. Future research could be undertaken in exploring the differentiation in individually based and group based assessments and analyzing the need for collaborative-based activities in higher education amongst poorly performing universities.

Conclusion

The research project served as substantiation towards the need for more collaborative-based teaching and learning practices in the space of higher education, incentivizing participation and active engagement to enhance one's interpersonal intelligence. The relationship between collaborative learning techniques and interpersonal intelligence cannot be understated, as consistent development would benefit students both within and beyond academic endeavours, thus strengthening one's intelligence for one's personal and social wellbeing.

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Appendix A: Questionnaire

Questionnaire: Exploring the use of Collaborative Learning Techniques to Enhance Interpersonal Intelligence

Dear Respondent

The aim of this research is to determine the usage of collaborative learning techniques to enhance interpersonal intelligence. This research is conducted as part of the partial completion of a postgraduate qualification in higher education.

The objective of this research is to explore the effectiveness of the four collaborative learning techniques you have been exposed to and their effect upon interpersonal intelligence. To help you better understand the context of the questions, two key definitions may be of value:

- Collaborative learning can be defined as teaching and learning based activities and methods which require students to work together in pairs or as groups for the purposes of problem solving and understanding the module content (Abrami et al, 1995).
- Interpersonal intelligence can be defined as the ability to understand others with regards to their emotions, behaviour and perceptions, which is a valuable trait to possess in the space of teaching and learning, the corporate environment and in general interpersonal and social interactions (Armstrong, 2010).

Please note that by completing this questionnaire, you have provided your consent towards having such data used for research purposes. The answers you provide serve as a reflection of the teaching practices that you were exposed to, therefore you are encouraged to provide your honest opinions. All completed questionnaires shall remain anonymous, ensuring identities are protected. All responses shall be anonymous and confidential, so there is no need to write your name or student number.

Please answer all the questions

There are three sections to complete.

[Type here]

SECTION A: Reflection of Activities

The following section is based on the four activities presented and requires a selection from the scale provided. Please rate each statement related to each activity according to the selection provided, highlighting the column you feel most applicable with an X:

Question 1: My views on the Teamwork Case Study:

a. Completing this assessment with others provided an effective platform for engaging with my peers

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

b. I felt more comfortable completing this assessment with others

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

c. Participation amongst all group members were equal

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

d. Completing this assessment with others has provided me with a better understanding of my peers with regards to their emotions and behaviour.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

e. In future, I would feel comfortable completing assessments of a similar nature in a group-based effort

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

[Type here]

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f. I now have a more positive outlook towards the module after completing the assessments.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-----------------------	--------------	----------------	-----------------	--------------------------

Question 2: My views on the Dyadic Essay Activity

a. Completing this assessment with others provided an effective platform for engaging with my peers

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-----------------------	--------------	----------------	-----------------	--------------------------

b. I felt more comfortable completing this assessment with others

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-----------------------	--------------	----------------	-----------------	--------------------------

c. Participation amongst all group members were equal

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-----------------------	--------------	----------------	-----------------	--------------------------

d. Completing this assessment with others has provided me with a better understanding of my peers with regards to their emotions and behaviour.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-----------------------	--------------	----------------	-----------------	--------------------------

[Type here]

e. In future, I would feel comfortable completing assessments of a similar nature in a group-based effort

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-----------------------	--------------	----------------	-----------------	--------------------------

f. I now have a more positive outlook towards the module after completing the assessments.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-----------------------	--------------	----------------	-----------------	--------------------------

Question 3: My views on the Collaborative Editing Activity

a. Completing this assessment with others provided an effective platform for engaging with my peers

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-----------------------	--------------	----------------	-----------------	--------------------------

b. I felt more comfortable completing this assessment with others

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-----------------------	--------------	----------------	-----------------	--------------------------

c. Participation amongst all group members were equal

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-----------------------	--------------	----------------	-----------------	--------------------------

d. Completing this assessment with others has provided me with a better understanding of my peers with regards to their emotions and behaviour.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-----------------------	--------------	----------------	-----------------	--------------------------

[Type here]

e. In future, I would feel comfortable completing assessments of a similar nature in a group-based effort

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-----------------------	--------------	----------------	-----------------	--------------------------

f. I now have a more positive outlook towards the module after completing the assessments.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-----------------------	--------------	----------------	-----------------	--------------------------

Question 4: My view on the Think-pair -share activity

a. Completing this assessment with others provided an effective platform for engaging with my peers

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-----------------------	--------------	----------------	-----------------	--------------------------

b. I felt more comfortable completing this assessment with others

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-----------------------	--------------	----------------	-----------------	--------------------------

c. Participation amongst all group members were equal

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-----------------------	--------------	----------------	-----------------	--------------------------

d. Completing this assessment with others has provided me with a better understanding of my peers with regards to their emotions and behaviour.

[Type here]

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-----------------------	--------------	----------------	-----------------	--------------------------

e. In future, I would feel comfortable completing assessments of a similar nature in a group-based effort

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-----------------------	--------------	----------------	-----------------	--------------------------

f. I now have a more positive outlook towards the module after completing the assessments.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-----------------------	--------------	----------------	-----------------	--------------------------

SECTION B: Reflection of Teaching and Learning Methods

The following section is based on your opinions towards the four activities presented and requires a selection from the scales provided (1 – 5). Each activity must be rated according to the statements provided and your agreement towards them. Please rate the items based on the grid below. Please indicate your selection and rating using the scale provided:

①	②	③	④	⑤
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Question 5

Activity 1	The Teamwork Based Case Study...				
1. Provided me with a better understanding of the module	① Strongly Agree	② Agree	③ Neither	④ Disagree	⑤ Strongly Disagree

[Type here]

2. Improved my writing abilities	① Strongly Agree	② Agree	③ Neither	④ Disagree	⑤ Strongly Disagree
3. Made problem – solving easier	① Strongly Agree	② Agree	③ Neither	④ Disagree	⑤ Strongly Disagree
4. Improved my communication methods with others	① Strongly Agree	② Agree	③ Neither	④ Disagree	⑤ Strongly Disagree
5. Provided me with insightful feedback through communicating with others	① Strongly Agree	② Agree	③ Neither	④ Disagree	⑤ Strongly Disagree
6. Provided a sense of “team spirit”	① Strongly Agree	② Agree	③ Neither	④ Disagree	⑤ Strongly Disagree
7. Created a more meaningful level of understanding	① Strongly Agree	② Agree	③ Neither	④ Disagree	⑤ Strongly Disagree

Question 6

Activity 2	The Dyadic Essay Activity...
-------------------	-------------------------------------

[Type here]

1. Provided me with a better understanding of the module	1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Neither	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
2. Improved my writing abilities	1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Neither	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
3. Made problem – solving easier	1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Neither	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
4. Improved my communication methods with others	1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Neither	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
5. Provided me with insightful feedback through communicating with others	1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Neither	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
6. Provided a sense of “team spirit”	1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Neither	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
7. Created a more meaningful level of understanding	1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Neither	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree

[Type here]

Question 7

Activity 3	The Collaborative Editing Activity				
1. Provided me with a better understanding of the module	① Strongly Agree	② Agree	③ Neither	④ Disagree	⑤ Strongly Disagree
2. Improved my writing abilities	① Strongly Agree	② Agree	③ Neither	④ Disagree	⑤ Strongly Disagree
3. Made problem – solving easier	① Strongly Agree	② Agree	③ Neither	④ Disagree	⑤ Strongly Disagree
4. Improved my communication methods with others	① Strongly Agree	② Agree	③ Neither	④ Disagree	⑤ Strongly Disagree
5. Provided me with insightful feedback through communicating with others	① Strongly Agree	② Agree	③ Neither	④ Disagree	⑤ Strongly Disagree
6. Provided a sense of “team spirit”	① Strongly Agree	② Agree	③ Neither	④ Disagree	⑤ Strongly Disagree

[Type here]

7. Created a more meaningful level of understanding

①
Strongly Agree

②
Agree

③
Neither

④
Disagree

⑤
Strongly Disagree

Question 8

Activity 4

The Think – Pair – Share Activity...

1. Provided me with a better understanding of the module

①
Strongly Agree

②
Agree

③
Neither

④
Disagree

⑤
Strongly Disagree

2. Improved my writing abilities

①
Strongly Agree

②
Agree

③
Neither

④
Disagree

⑤
Strongly Disagree

3. Made problem – solving easier

①
Strongly Agree

②
Agree

③
Neither

④
Disagree

⑤
Strongly Disagree

4. Improved my communication methods with others

①
Strongly Agree

②
Agree

③
Neither

④
Disagree

⑤
Strongly Disagree

5. Provided me with insightful feedback through communicating with others

①
Strongly Agree

②
Agree

③
Neither

④
Disagree

⑤
Strongly Disagree

[Type here]

6. Provided a sense of “team spirit”	① Strongly Agree	② Agree	③ Neither	④ Disagree	⑤ Strongly Disagree
7. Created a more meaningful level of understanding	① Strongly Agree	② Agree	③ Neither	④ Disagree	⑤ Strongly Disagree

SECTION C: Comments

Question 9

Please select one of the activities listed below which you feel to be the most effective method of learning and understanding.

- a) Teamwork based case study
- b) Dyadic essay
- c) Editing activity
- d) Think-pair-share activity

Question 10 Provide a reason for your choice.

[Type here]