1. Title, Abstract & Keywords

*In your abstract, please include a brief session description (not to exceed 100 words), and three to four keywords. If your proposal is accepted, this description will be printed in the conference program.*

Title: An Exploration of Self-Directed Teams in Higher Education

Abstract:

Group work is utilized in university programs to teach students how to solve complex issues, utilize multiple perspectives, and prepare them to effectively manage projects and relationships in the workforce. This session provides an overview of a training tool designed and implemented in a graduate program orientation for the purpose of improving the quality of student teamwork in the program. The training focuses on methods of how to build trust, utilize conflict, and increase group cohesion. Attendees will gain ideas on facilitating a learning experience that encourages students to focus their perceptions toward makes a successful group experience.

Keywords:

* + Team work
  + Trust
  + Conflict
  + Cohesion

1. Format

Activity or exercise

Roundtable discussion (60 minute only)

X **General discussion session**

2a) For activities and exercises only, is yours best suited for

X **A traditional classroom**

An online class

Either

2b) For activities and exercises only, is yours best suited for

Undergraduate students

Graduate students

X **Either**

1. Time Requested:

30 Minutes

X **60 Minutes** (*Roundtables must select 60 minutes*)

90 Minutes

1. Planning Details:

*Each room contains a white board with markers, computer (PC) with DVD capability and computer projector. Does your session require any other equipment?*

No additional equipment needed.

1. Teaching Implications:

*What is the contribution of your session to management pedagogy/andragogy? Specifically, please include your learning objectives, and describe what management and/or teaching topics are relevant to your session, and why. Also, include theoretical, disciplinary, or theoretical foundations that will help reviewers understand how your ideas fit within the broader field of management.*

Learning Objectives

* To help attendees recognize that the true learning in team efforts takes place in the process, not just in the completion of the assignment.
* Learn how to help and encourage attendees to use their past experiences in teams and use this information to help inform and prepare for their future interactions with team members.
* Gain skills to help attendees utilize constructive team skills (as discussed in the case study) in their team assignments through continual self-evaluation and reflection.
* Pedagogy of the case study to be explained to participants:
* Part 1 In this phase, the video case is shown to the audience. Here, the “problem” is presented and the focus of the case is given. Questions will be fielded from the audience as they prepare to solve the problem.
* Part 2 In this phase, the participants form groups and attempt to solve the problem. There is not a correct “answer” to the problem, but this serves as a precursor to the discussion about team dynamics and processes. Once the participants return from their smaller group discussions, the facilitators lead the discussion and illustrate the importance of the group process over solely the “solution.”

* Part 3 The cause for team process is universal in that it can be applied to every project that is completed within the program of study as well as in professional careers following their tenure in the university setting. The intent is for this information to remain with each student as they progress through their academic career and beyond.

Theories:

Action learning is the foundational educational theory used in the context of this discussion of group work. Action learning focuses on the approach of solving real-world problems through taking action and then reflecting upon the results. The action learning process typically involves five steps including: a problem that is critical and usually complex, a diverse problem solving team, a process that promotes inquiry and reflection, requires discussion to be converted to action, then solution, and finally, a commitment to learning. Action learning is a strategic and effective way of approaching and solving various types of problems. This approach works well in tackling the challenges of working in groups through a step-by-step process. Group members can conquer the challenges at hand together, offer diverse perspectives for crafting a solution, turn their words into action, and commit to ongoing learning. Action learning supports the process of creating an optimal learning experience for all members.

In researching groups and teams, there are many theories to consider. Ultimately, in the university context, our focus was on Bruce Tuckman’s stages of group development. The theory features five phases: forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning. Given the time constraints and types of projects in the coursework, this was chosen as the most relevant theory to follow as we explore team dynamics.

We also studied William Schutz’s Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation Theory (FIRO). This theory explores the concept that humans behave differently in groups versus when alone and how social and group interactions are different because of this. Schutz argued that humans have three interpersonal needs that must be met when working with others-inclusion, affection, and control (1966). According to this theory, interpersonal compatibility must be present for groups to function successfully.

Another group formation theory we considered was Joseph McGrath’s Time, Interaction, and Performance (TIP) Theory. McGrath's work argued that different teams follow different developmental paths to reach the same outcome. He also suggested that teams engage in four modes of group activity: inception, technical problem solving, conflict resolution, and execution. According to this model, modes "are potential, not required, forms of activity" with Modes I and IV (inception and execution) being involved in all group tasks and projects while Modes II (technical problem solving) and III (conflict resolution) may or may not occur in group activity (McGrath, 153). While an interesting theory with good points about what actions will always occur in groups and what may not, Tuckman’s theory seems more thorough in the group formation phases that will occur for the purpose of educating students in all of the possible phases of group formation.

1. Session Description and Plan:

*What will you actually do in this session? If appropriate, please include a timeline estimating the activities will you facilitate: how long will they take, and how will participants be involved? Please remember that reviewers will be evaluating how well the time request matches the activities you’d like to do, and the extent you can reasonably accomplish the session’s goals. Reviewers will also be looking for how you are engaging the participants in the session.*

Total Duration: 60 Minutes

1. Introduction/Rationale (20 minutes)

* Introduce presenters.
* Frame why this session is being conducted, and explain that it was created by former students who recently completed the LOP program the new cohort is about to begin.
* Provide rationale of the conceptualization of the activity
* Include overview of group formation through Tuckman’s form, storm, norm, perform, adjourn
* Include overview of elements that influence group work in LOP:
* Power and Influence, competing, priorities, time constraints, personalities, age differences, previous group experiences, and international students

2. Discuss Survey given to students and faculty (10 minutes)

3. Discuss recommendations for the improvement of work on teams (10 minutes)

* Team design, team feedback, creative leadership, training, behavioral checklist

4. Questions and Answers (20 minutes)

* Ask participants if they have any questions about the presenters’ experience working in teams within their graduate program.
* Ask participants how they feel about utilizing group projects in their classes, based on their previous experiences.
* Ask participants if they have any concerns about facilitating team projects in their classes.
* Ask participants to what ideas they have about further exploration of this topic that would be helpful to them in future years.
* Ask participants for feedback on how to improve the idea for improving the functioning of self-directed teams in higher education

1. Application to Conference theme:

How does your session fit with the overall OBTC theme of *United in Service*?

The proposal serves to influence and add value to the study and use of group work in the context of higher education. It contributes to the theme by contributing to the creation of a climate where students unite and serve each other to fulfill a common goal. It also encourages students to “think beyond” the textbook in broadening their understanding of uniting in group work.

1. Unique Contribution to OBTC:

*Have you presented the work in this proposal before? If so, how will it be different? Is this proposal under current review somewhere else? If so, please explain. How will your proposal be different for the OBTC conference?*

No. This proposal has not been submitted to any other program and it is unique to OBTC.