Roundtable Discussion:

**College Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) – Are our teaching methods up to the task?**

**Introduction:** *Provide a brief introduction that establishes the purpose and focus of the discussion. Describe what the intended outcome of the session will be and who the target audience is.*

Purpose and Focus of discussion**:**

The purpose of this roundtable is to ignite the long overdue discussion of how we, as college faculty members, respond to the increasing number of students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in our classrooms. Many statistics (see the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2018), show that with the higher diagnosis rate of ASD over the last few decades, we will increasingly see these students on our college campuses. Are we prepared? Although there is fairly extensive work discussing the support these students need on campus, very little of that is focused on what we, as college faculty, can do in our classrooms to support these students who have no intellectual deficits (commonly also referred to as High Functioning Autism), who however are limited by social communication challenges.

The purpose of this session is to bring this lack of attention on the part of college faculty to the forefront. Part of the session will be dedicated to sharing experiences, approaches and effective strategies that our colleagues all over the world have used to support students with ASD.

Intended outcome:

Expected outcome of this session:

1. Participants will understand that higher education teachers need to be increasingly concerned about students with ASD. I will provide a brief overview of the relevant literature that addresses these issues (this literature review will be more expansive than the brief one provided in this submission).
2. Participants will learn about a variety of approaches and strategies used by colleagues around the world to support diverse learners (particularly students with ASD) with the goal of creating a more inclusive classroom environment.
3. Participants will make connections with other interested colleagues. This hopefully leads to collaborative projects that ultimately will help increase success in college for students with high-functioning ASD.

Target audience: Anyone who teaches college courses.

**Theoretical Foundation/Teaching Implications**. *Briefly specify the relevant background literature that the exercise is based upon and how your session contributes to effective teaching and learning in the field of management.*

We will undoubtedly see an increase in the number of college students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) on our campuses in the coming years. Are we as educators sufficiently prepared to provide an appropriate education that these (and all) students deserve? How can we, as educators, adjust our teaching methods to provide a more inclusive learning environment?

The diagnosis of ASD has increased dramatically. About half of those diagnosed with ASD have average or above average intellectual ability (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2018). These high functioning adolescents with ASD will increasingly consider college as the next step (Zeedyk, Tipton & Blacher, 2016). Are we as higher education teachers prepared to make accommodations so these students can get the education they deserve?

There is quite some research and discussion about how colleges should best accommodate these students (Adreon & Durocher, 2007); most published in Autism Journals. However, most of this discussion centers on support services outside the classroom. Students with ASD need (among others) assistance in understanding social interaction (Adreon & Durocher, 2007). This, together with the ever increasing emphasis on cooperative learning and group projects in many management courses, makes it particularly challenging for students with ASD to be successful (Glennon, 2001; Gobbo & Shmulsky, 2012, 2013).

There is a lot of discussion in Autism journals about the needs and challenges of college students with High functioning Autism (Adreon, & Durocher, 2007; Barnhill, 2016; VanBergeijk, Klin, & Volkmar, 2008; White, Ollendick & Bray, 2011; Zager & Alpern, 2010). However, there is little discussion in the higher education community on how instruction might need to be adapted to be more inclusive to these students. One of the adaptations might be the way how group work is conducted. This leaves a big gap that this roundtable discussion is intended to start bridging.

This session contributes to effective teaching and learning by focusing on the needs of a long ignored subset of college students; those who are diagnosed with high functioning autism spectrum disorder (ASD). We need to find ways to support these students through our curriculum design, classroom management, and other strategies that help these students achieve their academic goals at college. This discussion also relates to the broader debate on how we can make college classrooms more inclusive for all types of learners (Green, 2018; Parsons, 2015; Matthews, 2009; McLeod, Allen, Lewis, & Robertson, 2017; Morina, Cortes-Vega, & Molina, 2015).

**Session Description.** *Provide an overview of what you will actually do in the MOBTS conference session. Include a timeline for the session and how participants will be involved. Remember, reviewers are looking for participant engagement in these sessions.*

15 to 20 minutes: I will provide an overview of the current literature on students with high-functioning ASD on college campuses (comprised of articles from the Autism community and Higher Education Teaching Journals).

40 to 45 minutes: A guided discussion with the participants about the issues raised; particularly regarding their experience with students with high functioning autism (or other diverse learners). I also expect a general discussion on how we can make group work more inclusive by how we set up teams, by the guidelines and support we provide etc.

Since there are international participants, I am very interested in discussing these issues with colleagues from different countries who I think might have different approaches on how to make college teaching inclusive to students with high functioning autism.

References:

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