

**TEACHING COLLABORATION IN A COLLEGIATE
ENVIRONMENT: MOTIVATIONS AND ABILITIES OF
COLLEGE PROFESSORS**

Honors Thesis

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Abstract

The term ‘soft skills’ encompasses a range of personal, non-technical skills that include attributes such as adaptability, leadership and communication. Collaboration is an example of a soft skill that has proven to be essential in education and reflective of the current workforce. There is a growing gap between the “expectations of employers and the reality of today’s young talent” that is referred to as the soft skills gap (Tulgan, 2015). Closing this gap is part of preparing students for their future outside of education, which is the mission of many higher education institutions across the world.

This project explores how higher education professors feel about all soft skills, particularly collaboration, in addition to exploring their motivations and abilities to teach and foster these skills in their own classrooms. The research is pertinent to the second half of the project, which is developing an informational and persuasive campaign. Based on research done on soft skills, a questionnaire was conducted at three higher education institutions to better understand professors’ perspectives of soft skills and collaboration. The findings demonstrate that professors feel very strongly that both collaboration and all soft skills are important to success outside of the classroom although many view them as extremely difficult and not always their responsibility to teach. There was a high-level of interest from professors to learn more information about soft skills. This is delivered through part two of this project, a website campaign with the goal of making college professors more aware of the significance of teaching soft skills and giving them techniques and tools to do this in any field.

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PART ONE: RESEARCH

Introduction

The term 'soft skills' encompasses a range of personal non-technical skills that include attributes such as adaptability, leadership, and communication. Collaboration, defined as working together with one or more people to effectively reach a common goal, is just one of the many soft skills that are essential for student success upon leaving college and entering the workforce. There is a growing gap between the "expectations of employers and the reality of today's young talent" (Tulgan, Bridging the Soft Skills Gap: How to Teach the Missing Basics to Today's Young Talent, 2015) that is referred to as the soft skills gap. Closing this gap is part of preparing students for their future, which is mission the of many higher education institutions across the world. This research explores how higher education professors feel about soft skills and specifically collaboration, as well as exploring their motivation and ability to teach and foster these skills in their own classroom.

Literature Review

Soft Skills

'Soft skills' is a term that is very broadly defined in our current society. There is a wide range of research that attests to the importance of these skills but there are many different definitions of what exactly soft skills are. Many researchers have defined soft skills as encompassing a range of personal non-technical skills. This spans self-awareness to leadership, and professional morale (Tulgan, Bridging the Millennial Soft Skills Gap, 2015) (Ngang, Yunus, & Hashim, 2015). Other researchers narrow the definition to define soft skills as being more closely related to human skills that "focus on the competency of working with other individuals" (Ariratana, Saowanee, & Ngang, 2015) These definitions focus on skills such as creativity,

persuasion, adaptability and other personal attributes that enable someone to “interact effectively and harmoniously with other people” (Blaschka, 2019). Many other scholars include everything under the umbrella of performing in a team but also including personal skills that are beneficial on their own to an individual (Musa, Mufi, Latiff, & Amin, 2012) (Hairuzila, 2009). Skills that have been under the definition of ‘soft skills’ include but are not limited to, leadership, creativity, communication, entrepreneurship, ethics, and adaptability. One researcher, Susan E. Roberts who published the book, *Seamless*, has divided all soft skills into four categories; communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity and innovation. This definition still encompasses all of the same ideals as the other researchers, it is just worded in a new way, namely the four ‘C’s’, originally coined by the National Education Association (Roberts, 2017).

Importance of Soft Skills

Soft skills are vital attributes that help graduates succeed regardless of their chosen field. These skills are fundamental for both work and personal success not just directly out of higher education, but for people’s entire lives (Hairuzila, 2009) (Blaschka, 2019) (Musa, Mufi, Latiff, & Amin, 2012) (Bancino & Zevalkink, 2017). In the workforce, there is an ever-widening "soft skills" gap, especially among the younger employees (Tulgan, Bridging the Millennial Soft Skills Gap, 2015) (Ngang, Yunus, & Hashim, 2015). The skills that employers are looking for in new hires they either do not see in graduates or they have the perception based on past experiences that new graduates do not have the non-technical skills needed. Bruce Tulgan, who has published extensive literature on the soft skills gap and has surveyed and interviewed thousands of employers and employees, explains that although modern day graduates may show up to job interviews with skills and talents, they are lacking the soft skills that help them succeed once they get the job. Tulgan states that the current cliché is that “people are hired because of

their hard skills but ultimately fired because of their soft skills” (Tulgan, Bridging the Soft Skills Gap: How to Teach the Missing Basics to Today's Young Talent, 2015). Tulgan’s research supports Bolton’s claim that 80 percent of the people who fail at work do not fail due to their lack of technical skills but rather because of their inability to relate well to others. Hence, what carries more weight appears to be soft skills rather than brainpower or technical skills (Bolton, 1986). Another study by the Protocol School of Washington, DC and conducted by Harvard University, the Carnegie Foundation, and the Stanford Research Institute, found that technical skills and knowledge account for about 15 percent of the reason an individual gets a job, keeps the job and advances in that job but the remaining 85 percent of job success is based on an individual’s soft skills (NSSA, 2019). Along with the importance to employers, these attributes are also essential in a workforce that is rapidly changing in the face of technology. Workers now need to use their soft skills to adapt quickly to changing technologies and organizational structures. “Skills such as decision-making, problem-solving, managing conflicts, teamwork and being innovative are important elements of job competence” (Musa, Mufi, Latiff, & Amin, 2012). Outside of the professional world, soft skills are also important in personal success. Having soft skills makes you more proficient in communicating and adapting, among other things, when dealing with personal relationships and partnerships (NSSA, 2019).

Collaboration as a Soft Skill

Collaboration is just one of the many attributes characterized as a soft skill and was listed as one of the top five most in-demand soft skills on LinkedIn’s Global Talent Trends 2019 Report (Blaschka, 2019). There are many definitions of collaboration, but all of the definitions presented in research agree that collaboration is working together with one or more people to effectively reach a common goal (Russell, 2008) (Indeed, 2019) (Blaschka, 2019). Collaboration

skills usually include; the ability to read the emotional climate of a situation and improve emotional safety for others, apologize, focus on the project and not on individual personalities, listen, express and advocate for one's own point of view, take another person's perspective and define mutual goals (Morel, 2014). “Generally, individuals, agencies, or organizations collaborate because they believe that together they can accomplish what could not be done alone” (Russell, 2008). Collaboration is able to leverage diverse perspectives and skills and can encourage creativity and productivity, it is because of this that collaboration is highly important in both education and in the workforce (Morel, 2014). With the increase of global and remote offices, today's employers rely on their employees' ability to collaborate with colleagues and customers not just in the office but digitally as well. When an employee can effectively connect with others their value multiplies (Blaschka, 2019). Working as a team in the workplace not only drives greater productivity, but also fosters healthy relationships between employees. When co-workers work together they are more efficient and create more connections and are able to grow knowledge (Indeed, 2019). In education, collaboration is imperative because it requires students to rely on insights from their peers and create their own knowledge (Musa, Mufi, Latiff, & Amin, 2012). Although very useful, it isn't always easy to collaborate, especially across significant differences in cultural perspectives, experiences, personal, or organizational histories. Collaboration is a soft skill that takes time and is an “ongoing work in process, with all the highs and lows of the collective human experience” (Carter, 2003).

Teaching Soft Skills

There is a hesitation in saying whose responsibility it is to make sure graduates have these skills prior to entering the workforce. Soft skills are generally developed over the course of people's entire lives, although the soft skills gap is now showing that this assumption is not

always correct, and college students make it all the way to the work force without ever learning how to adapt, communicate, innovate, be creative and utilize many other nontechnical skills (Tulgan, Bridging the Soft Skills Gap: How to Teach the Missing Basics to Today's Young Talent, 2015) (Ngang, Yunus, & Hashim, 2015). Many researchers turn to look at specifically higher education, the place that people are educated right before entering the workforce.

Research explains that it is the responsibility of the universities to ensure that graduates have relevant skills to gain employment upon graduation and they should be combining both hard and soft skills in their curriculum. Many universities acknowledge this importance of soft skills in their missions, so in turn it is the job of the educators in these institutions to assist the students in acquiring these skills and carry out the mission of their institutions (Hairuzila, 2009) (Ngang, Yunus, & Hashim, 2015). Nealy, who studied integrating soft skills through active learning in higher education stated that "faculty members preparing future leaders must undergo a transformation". A large challenge for higher education professionals involves adapting instruction to accommodate providing students with skills that meet business and industry demands. Nealy's study specifically looked at active learning activities, that are defined as a teaching approach that has students search for meaning, hold responsibility, has a concern with skills and knowledge and approaches curriculum from a wider career or social setting. The study found that active learning activities provided students an opportunity to develop soft skills. The active learning process encouraged and allowed students to adapt, personalize and discover their own method for understanding course material, this is just one way universities can approach integrating soft skill education (Nealy, 2005). Higher education educators must learn to build soft-skills coaching into their curriculum and teaching routines in order to prepare students for their future careers in any field. Tulgan recommends that leaders should "Require it. Measure it.

Reward people when they do it. Hold people to account when they don't" (Tulgan, Bridging the Millennial Soft Skills Gap, 2015).

Teaching Collaboration

Teaching and fostering specifically collaboration as a soft skill in a collegiate classroom is different from teaching soft skills as a whole. Collaboration is a skill that is proven to be useful across disciplines and is more easily implemented and beneficial in a classroom setting. To have the desire to and the ability to collaborate, most people need their minds and mouths to be retrained. In our society, there isn't much in our overall culture that develops people into collaborators. There are so many factors in our civilization that pull people towards "competition, complacency, defensiveness, or disregard for the collective body". Due to this, it takes effort to discover the deeper benefits of collaboration and teach students to unlearn the attitudes and behaviors that undermine it (Carter, 2003). In education, collaboration is an effective learning practice which makes teaching collaboration skills in a classroom more worthwhile. "Working with others to share ideas, take a point of view, defend a position, give and accept feedback, achieve consensus, and apply knowledge to a common goal leads to improved teaching and learning" (Morel, 2014). Group collaboration particularly is important in adult education, as adults want to share their experiences and interact with others both academically and professionally. A large part about teaching collaboration skills in a collegiate environment is developing a learning climate that is conducive to collaboration. Morel, in her article about promoting collaborative practices explains that there are three essential elements for creating that environment. There must be involvement in significant work, where the expectations of a collaborative project are high and meaningful so that it is taken seriously. Trust is also an important component in an environment where the educators need to work to create a

nonjudgmental and transparent environment, this can take a lot of time. Consistent processes is the last essential element for creating an environment for collaboration to thrive. This means there needs to be identified roles, discussion protocols, and agreed-upon norms that lead to productive dialogue (Morel, 2014). A study done on the effectiveness of project based learning teaching the skills of collaboration found that it is a very effective way to develop this soft skill in a classroom setting. The study found that when students are able to listen attentively and comprehend what is being presented to them, they are able to further enhance their ability to make further inquiries and respond appropriately. Students in the study also acknowledged that they became assertive when they learned and practiced to express and exchange their ideas and also that good teamwork contributed to a successful outcome of the project (Musa, Mufi, Latiff, & Amin, 2012). Project based learning is just one way higher education instructors can implement fostering collaboration in their classrooms, the simplest way would be that “if educators expect students to excel in soft skills, then teachers must model these skills” (Morel, 2014) such as collaboration.

Methodology

Procedure

Based on the literature review a fourteen question anonymous online survey was developed asking questions about demographics and perceptions of collaboration and soft skills; including familiarity with the subjects, whether they see them as important and useful, and their perception of their own ability to teach them in their classrooms. The poll was distributed by email to all teaching faculty at Boston College, Salem State University, and Cape Cod Community College. These institutions were chosen so that there would be a representation of

private and public higher education institutions, and so that a university, college and community college would be represented. With all three institutions combined, a total of 2,172 surveys were sent out. The survey was left open for twenty days; after fifteen days they were sent one reminder e-mail.

Participants

Survey respondents included 362 volunteers who are teaching faculty at Boston College, Salem State University, and Cape Cod Community College. The volunteers were 38.12% male, 58.84% female and 3.04% chose not to disclose their gender. Their ages ranged from 18 to 65+ with the most majority of participants being between 35 and 54 years old making up 71.26% of respondents.

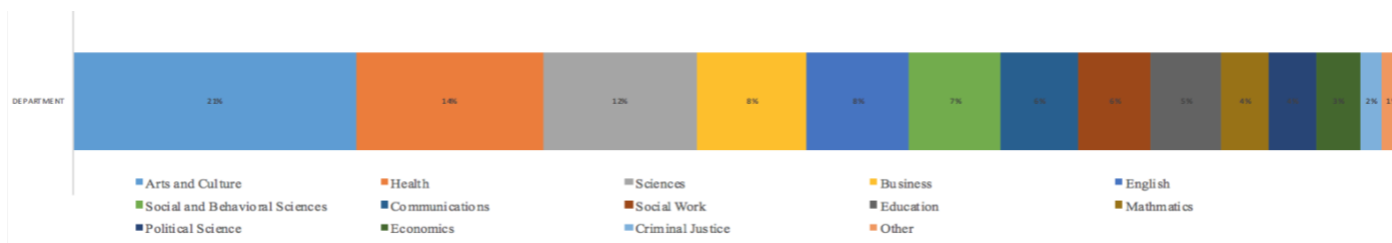


Figure A: Q2 - "What department do you teach in?"

The respondents taught in many different departments (Figure A), with the majority of professors instructing in an arts and culture department; this includes history language and theatre. There was also a substantial amount of professors in the health studies department which includes nursing and sports and movement science. The volunteers also represented a range of types of professors with 27% of respondents being adjunct professors, 21% being full professors, and 16% holding the title of an associate professor. The rest of respondents represented assistant, visiting, and tenured track professors.

Survey

1. What best describes the type of professor you are?

- Adjunct
- Visiting
- Assistant
- Full
- Administrator
- Associate
- Tenured
- Other (please specify) _____

2. What department do you teach in?

- _____

3. What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Non binary / third gender
- Prefer not to say

4. What is your age?

- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64

- 65+

Soft Skills are defined as interpersonal skills that do not depend on acquired knowledge. Soft skills include qualities such as adaptability, creativity and critical thinking.

5. Do you see having soft skills as a valuable asset to your students in their future?

- Yes
- No

Why?

6. What is your opinion on teaching/fostering soft skills in the collegiate classroom?

Collaboration is defined as the ability to effectively work with other people to create something.

This also includes being able to resolve conflicts with others along with knowing how to effectively transfer knowledge between individuals.

7. Do you see collaboration as a valuable asset to your students' future?

- Yes
- No

Why?

8. Are you familiar with the processes of group formation?

- Extremely familiar
- Very familiar
- Somewhat familiar
- Not so familiar

- Not at all familiar

9. Do you see *teaching* collaboration essential for student success?

- A great deal
- A lot
- A moderate amount
- A little
- Not at all

Why?

10. Do you feel that collaboration is useful in all disciplines?

- Yes
- No
- Somewhat

Please explain.

11. Do you know how to effectively go about teaching collaboration in your classroom environment?

- A great deal
- A lot
- A moderate amount
- A little
- None at all

Where did you learn these skills?

12. Do you ever teach/foster collaboration in your classroom environment?

- Regularly
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

If so, how?

13. Would you be interested in learning more about how to teach collaboration?

- Extremely interested
- Very interested
- Somewhat interested
- Not so interested
- Not at all interested

14. What would be your preferred method of obtaining information about how to teach collaboration?

- Presentations: Someone presenting this information to you at your school
- Paper materials: Pamphlets
- One Resources such as emails or website with information

Other (please specify)

Results

The expectations of the survey were that college professors would see soft skills and collaboration as important but may not have been motivated or able to teach and foster these skills in their own classroom. The survey also sought to understand the thoughts of professors who do not see collaboration and soft skills as valuable as researchers have proven them to be and gain valuable information to use to create the campaign.

In order to see respondents' perception of the value of soft skills for their students, participants were asked if they see having soft skills a valuable asset to their students in their future. The results were as expected, with 99% of contributors responding yes, that they did see having soft skills a valuable asset to their students' future. With the purpose of looking at respondents' perception of teaching these skills in the collegiate classroom, the survey then presented an open ended question asking what the respondents opinion is on teaching/fostering soft skills in the collegiate classroom. All of the respondents answered this open ended question, with 88% of answers stating in their response that teaching soft skills are very important and essential. Although, 17% of responses also included that doing so is very difficult or almost impossible to do in a collegiate environment. Many of these responses explained that although it is vital, it is not always valued, and very difficult in certain fields. Another 6% of respondents either did not want to teach soft skills or said that they couldn't be taught. Many of the professors believed that it is not the responsibility of college professors and that it is outside of their field of study. This demonstrates that although it is seen as important among the majority of professors, there are many beliefs that integrating teaching soft skills is difficult, and sometimes seen as not part of the instructor's job. There are many feelings that it is a neglected part of teaching that needs to be worked on.

The study then looked to gain insight to the respondents' perception and understanding of collaboration as a soft skill. Participants were presented a yes or no question asking if they saw collaboration as a valuable asset to their students in their future, then they were asked why they responded how they did. 99% of respondents replied yes, and the general consensus among their reasoning was that collaboration is critical regardless of field and crucial for work environment. The open ended responses were coded and tagged with key words. Many of the key phrases in the open ended section were that collaboration is useful for work, a key skill, important to learn, and lifelong. Over 50% of respondents emphasized work environments and real life requiring collaboration. These responses demonstrate an understanding of the importance of collaboration in their students' life. In order to look at the respondents' familiarity with collaboration theory,

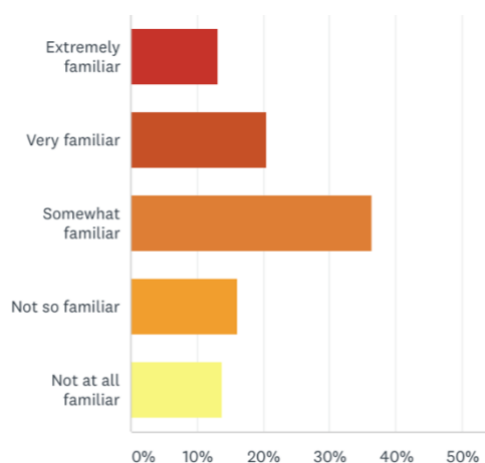


Figure B: Q8 - Are you familiar with the processes of group formation?

they were asked a question seeing if they are familiar with the processes of group formation, which is a common collaboration theory developed by Bruce Tuckman that proposed five stages that every team goes through during development: forming, storming, norming, performing and adjourning. The responses were diverse (Figure B) with the majority of respondents (37%) being somewhat familiar with the processes of group formation. In total, only 34% of respondents were very or extremely familiar with this theory. This shows that some professors have been educated on collaboration and exactly how it works, although there are still 66% of respondents that are not at all familiar to somewhat familiar with this concept.

In order to understand how respondents assess collaboration in terms of their duty to their students, they were asked if they see teaching collaboration essential for student success (Figure C). After responding they were asked why they answered the way they did in an open ended textbox. The majority of professors, 36%, responded that they see teaching collaboration a great deal essential for student success. There

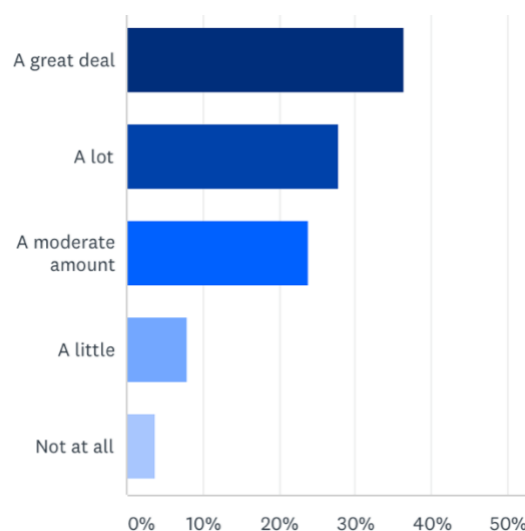


Figure C: Q9 - Do you see teaching collaboration essential for student success?

were also another 28% that saw essential for student success a lot. These respondents replied that they answered this way because teachers need to assure their student are gaining important skills. Many responses reiterated again that collaboration is essential outside of the world of education, many others commented on that part of teaching requires this extra level of instruction. The rest of respondents only saw teaching collaboration essential for student success a moderate amount to not at all. With the respondents that answered a moderate amount, a little, and not at all many explained in their comments that they believed in the power of individuality and some thought many people accomplish more on their own. They also touched upon again that collaboration is not part of their curriculum, what they do as a professor or a part their field. These responses show that although 99% of respondents believe that collaboration is a valuable asset to students' future, many did not fully see teaching collaboration essential for student success. This is mainly because they don't see fostering collaboration as part of their teaching duty or don't believe it is necessary in their field. This directly relates to the next question where respondents were asked if they feel that collaboration is useful in all disciplines. This was asked to see perceptions on

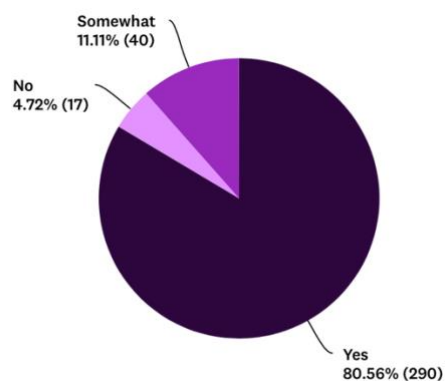


Figure D: Q10 - Do you feel that collaboration is useful in all disciplines?

different fields in case it was not touched upon in other open ended responses. As shown in figure D, the majority of respondents said that yes, they believed collaboration is useful in all disciplines. When asked why, they responded that humans working and learning together is an essential part of life. Many also responded that interdisciplinary collaboration is also crucial. The remaining 16% of professors said that collaboration is

only somewhat or not at all useful in all disciplines. These respondents explained that collaboration can limit progress and they believe that individual work can be better in certain disciplines such as the arts, which was a common example.

The next part of the survey sought to understand perceptions of the professors own classroom practices and gather further information to move to phase two, developing a campaign. In order to measure their current level of knowledge when it comes to teaching collaboration, respondents were asked if they know how to effectively go about teaching collaboration in their classroom environment. The responses can be seen in Figure E, where 56% of respondents knew a moderate amount to none at all about how to effectively teach collaboration. After answering the rating scale style question they were then asked where they learned the skills. There responses were coded and divided into four

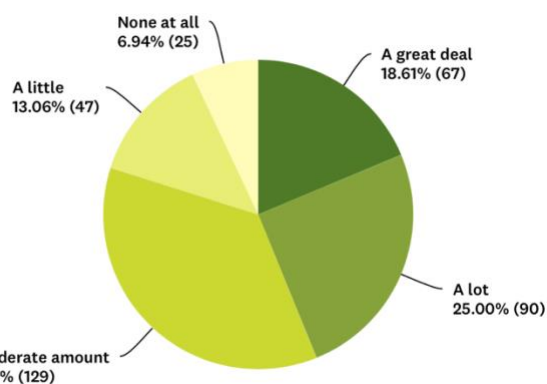


Figure E: Q11 - Do you know how to effectively go about teaching collaboration in your classroom environment?

major categories; life and work experiences, individual research, workshops and conferences, and people who have limited knowledge or no skills. Their responses were able to be a part of more than one category. 76% responded to the open ended question, with many who did not answer responded that they knew little or nothing at all about how to effectively teach collaboration. Out of everyone that responded (Figure F) 77% said they got their knowledge

from experience, 16% said they either attended workshops or conferences that taught them how to effectively go about teaching collaboration, another 9% did individual research and 4% explained that they had limited knowledge. When looking at just the respondents who knew little or nothing at all about how to effectively go about teaching

collaboration in their classroom environment there were many people (51%) who did not respond, but the other 50% mainly received their knowledge from experience and 20% claimed they had little or no knowledge at all, only 3% of these respondents spoke about attending workshops and conferences compared to the 16% of all of the respondents. When looking at respondents who knew a moderate amount to a great deal about effectively teaching collaboration, the majority still learned from work and life experiences but many attended workshops, conferences, or used individual research.

The survey then looked at the practices of the respondents to see how often collaboration is currently being taught by these professors. The respondents were asked if they



Figure F: Q11 – Open Ended Responses: Where did you learn these skills?

ever teach or foster collaboration in their own classroom environment. The majority of respondents said they did this regularly at 63% and another 27% responded that they do this sometimes (Figure G). The respondents were then asked in an open ended response if they did respond that they did this in their own classroom

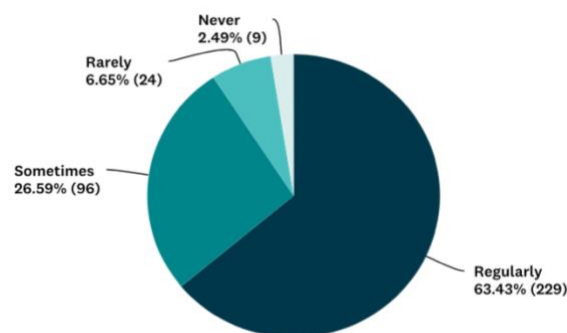


Figure G: Q12 - "Do you ever teach/foster collaboration in your classroom environment?"

how they went about doing it. Out of all of the 246 responses to the open ended question, 42% mentioned using group work in class on smaller assignments, another 33% said they use group projects. Another 7% mentioned peer editing and 20% said they fostered collaboration by leading discussion in class. These responses demonstrate just a few of the more popular ways to teach and foster collaboration in a collegiate environment.

The final two questions of the survey were designed exclusively for developing the campaign. In order to gauge the interest level of respondents they were asked if they would be interested in learning more about how to teach collaboration (Figure H). The majority of respondents were somewhat interested, making up 39% of respondents. These results show that

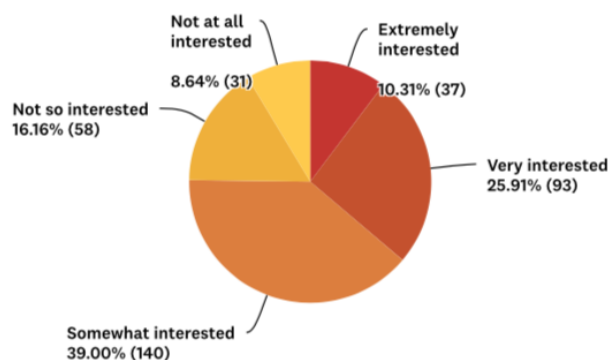


Figure H: Q13 - "Would you be interested in learning more about how to teach collaboration?"

although there is 25% of respondents that would not be very willing to learn more, 75% would be somewhat to extremely interested in learning more information about teaching collaboration, which is very good when looking at designing a campaign to do this. It also shows that somewhere in

the campaign there should be a section informing professors that are not interested in learning more, the reasons they can be and the benefits to learning more.

The final survey question was geared to choose the medium for the campaign. Participants were asked what their preferred method of obtaining information about how to teach collaboration would be. The majority of respondents at 63% answered that they would like online resources such as emails or a website with information. Another 41% said they would like this information presented at their school. These results show that online resources would be the best method for delivery as it is universal and can be accessed easily by any university professional. Although, many people that said that they would prefer another method want hands on workshops where they are part of the activity, this is also something to think about when moving forward with the campaign.

Conclusion

Since preparing students for their future is one of the main goals of higher education institutions worldwide, several authors have looked at soft skills being a part of this education, seeing that they have been established as essential for success in in both work and personal life. The research has found that soft skills, meaning interpersonal skills that do not depend on acquired knowledge are essential in the workforce (Ariratana, Saowanee, & Ngang, 2015) (Ngang, Yunus, & Hashim, 2015), and that there is a widening soft skills gap where employers see new candidates as lacking the soft skills that help them succeed once they get the job (Tulgan, Bridging the Millennial Soft Skills Gap, 2015). This study looked to understand current perceptions of college professors about soft skills. It found that respondents see soft skills as a valuable asset to their students' futures.

Looking specifically at collaboration as a soft skill the research shows that in both education and the workforce, working together with one or more people to effectively reach a common goal is necessary and help increase knowledge and develops other soft skills. This study found that these professors see collaboration as a valuable asset to their students' future and the majority feel that it is useful in all disciplines as well.

Along with looking at the importance of soft skills, there was been research done on the responsibility and challenges of teaching soft skills in higher education. Research has found that hard skills and soft skills should be in higher education curriculum in order to guarantee students are fully prepared to enter the workforce. Studies also look at the challenges of professors and the ways that active learning can help integrate these skills (Nealy, 2005). This study sought to understand the respondents' opinion on teaching soft skills in the classroom. It found that although they see these skills as valuable to their students many believe it is very difficult to do or that they do not want to do it because it is not their responsibility.

Studies looking at specifically teaching collaboration have found that collaboration is an effective learning practice that is beneficial in and out of the classroom, studies have also found that a large part about teaching collaboration is the environment that you are doing it in (Morel, 2014). This study looked at these professors' motivation and ability to teach collaboration. It found that many professors see teaching collaboration as essential for student success but do not feel it is their duty to teach it in their own classroom. When asking about the ability and practices of these respondents it was found that many teach collaboration in their own classrooms but admit they are not fully educated on the topic and have learned most of what they know through just life experiences and not much formal education and training.

The final part of this study is working towards the next part of the part of this project, developing a campaign so that college professors can be more aware of the significance of teaching collaboration and soft skills and how to go about doing it. The study found that many are interested in learning more and the best approach to the next part of the project is an online resource.

PART TWO: CAMPAIGN

Theory

In order to effectively develop a persuasive campaign or message, there are many theories of persuasion that can be used. Social judgment theory is based on the idea that the effect of a persuasive message on a particular issue depends on the way that the receiver evaluates the position of the message. According to this theory, an individual weighs any new idea by comparing it with their current point of view. This determines where their ‘attitudinal anchor’ should be placed on an attitude scale in an individual’s mind (Figure I). The theory looks specifically at attitude change and the conditions under which attitude change takes place along with predicting the direction and extent of the attitude change. The theory also attempts to

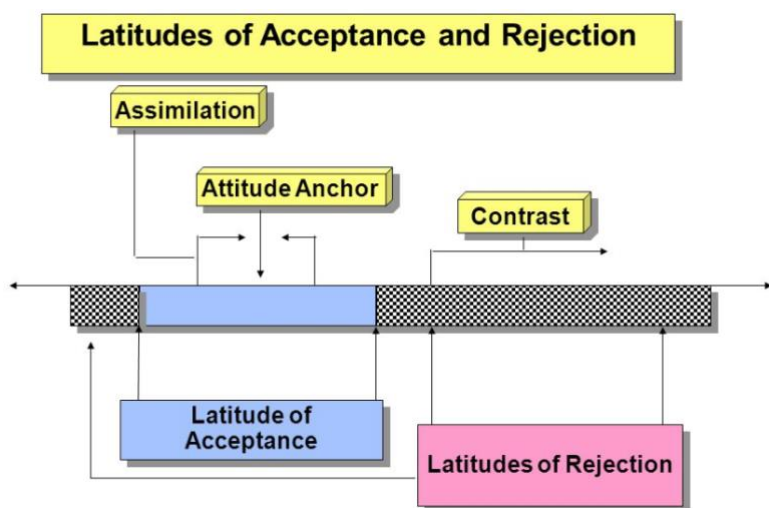


Figure I: Social Judgement Theory Diagram

explain how likely a person might be to change his or her opinion, the probable direction of that change, their tolerance toward the opinion of others, and their level of commitment to their position” (Mallard, 2010).

The strength of the social judgement theory is that it illustrates the most

important elements that motivate people to accept a message and it also shows what the connections are between these motives and the attributes of the product or service. When giving a persuasive message to an audience you first want to understand where their attitude anchor falls and then position your message in their latitude of acceptance. This is because if the underlying values of consumers are not aligned with attributes of a message, they will not be interested in following it and the interpretation will be negative (Asemah & Nwammuo,

2017). Messages that fall within the latitude of non-commitment where they have no opinion, which is not shown in the figure should result in perception and behavior change. Messages that fall in the latitude of acceptance are likely to be accepted due to assimilation effects and can even perceive the message as closer to anchor than it really is. Messages in the latitude of rejection do not result in perception or behavior change due to contrast effects, although, the boomerang effect can happen during contrasting when a person's anchor is moved in the opposite direction of the proposed message. Ego also comes into play with social judgment theory because a person's commitment to an issue effects the size of the latitude of acceptance and rejection (Mathis, 2018). In order to properly understand an audience's latitudes of acceptance, rejection and non-commitment formative research should be conducted. This was the purpose of the survey, to analyze and understand the current perceptions of college professors on teaching soft skills, specifically collaboration. This particular campaign is designed to convince college professors that they should be implementing teaching and fostering soft skills into their teachings with their normal curriculum. Based on the survey we found that the majority of professors see the importance of this and are already interested in learning more. Their struggles are that it is difficult to teach, not part of their job description, or they feel they don't have time or it does not fit in with their teaching. The campaign will address these problems while making it clear that the values of the professors are in line with the values of the campaign. This will be done by really explaining the importance of teaching these skills and how it aligns with the attitudes of professors and the institutions they are a part of.

Reflection

To create my campaign, I used social judgment theory, my research, and my background in design and communications. A website was developed for college professors to further understand and obtain information about why and how they should be implementing fostering and teaching soft skills into their own classrooms, regardless of their discipline.

The home page of the website serves the purpose of informing the reader of the goals of the campaign. It briefly goes over each section of the site; understand, see, implement. The home page also includes a brief introduction on my history and gives the reader access to this research. The home page also includes a section where the professor looking at the site can reach out and ask questions about anything regarding teaching soft skills.

The first section of the site is called 'Understand'. This page serves the purpose of allowing college professors to look at exactly what soft skills are and give solid definitions that they can use. The reasoning behind this section of the website was to align with the common knowledge of college professors but give them more detailed definitions and a full understanding about soft skills. This goes hand in hand with social judgement theory where comprehension is important to being within someone's latitude of acceptance.

The second section of the website is called 'See'. This is an interactive page for the professors that gives visuals, such as a YouTube video by Bruce Tulgan on what exactly soft skills have to offer and why they are so important to their students along with why they are so important to teach. This section is split up into five sections; the soft skills gap, job retention, education & life, educator responsibility and educator benefits. Each of these works to explain the importance of soft skills and the responsibility of college educators to do this. This section of the website is really important while using social judgement theory to persuade these college professors. We want to demonstrate with this part of the site that our mission aligns with theirs.

This demonstrates why this mission is important and why it matters to not just the students but to their teaching as well. Once the college professors see that the message of this site is in-line with their own views they are more likely to adhere to what the message is saying in the implement section.

The last section of the website is titled 'Implement'. This is where college professors can go to see actual techniques they can use to implement soft skills into their classrooms. The first section of the page focuses on soft skills as a whole, it recommends things such as active learning strategies, creating a learning environment where soft skills can thrive and assessment. The second part of the site lists every single soft skill and has an option to read more, the one that is 'click-able' is collaboration. The strategies that are in this section of the site were chosen very strategically. The first section is for professors that don't feel they have time to focus on specific soft skills. Time restraints were seen as a big problem when looking at research conducted on why college professors do not foster soft skills (Hairuzila, 2009). This study also saw that researchers recognized that the deterrent was not the result of time constraint but rather their lack of awareness of the various teaching methods that they could employ to integrate soft skills in their teaching within the time that they had. This section of the site seeks to bring awareness to these teaching methods. The second part of 'Implement' is for professors who have a specific soft skill in mind that they want to improve on with their students. The page I elaborated on was just 'collaboration' because this is the skill my research was centered on. Although, if I was continuing this website and research further I would look at every skill and develop the read more section for each.

When it comes to the actual design of the site I wanted it to be interesting, and easily accessible. Displaying so many facts and text means the design needs to be put in a way that

looks 'fun'. The use of the brains as a common theme throughout the site adds this element as well. Interaction with the site is also very important. In order to portray this, every page has wither a click through slideshow, video, or hover boxes. The ease of use was another important thing I considered while designing this persuasive and informational campaign. The three simple sections along with the descriptions and menus on each page help the professor find exactly what they are looking for. It also isn't that big of a site page wise which allows a professor to quickly get all of the information they need to understand what soft skills are, see why they are important, and learn how to foster them in their own classroom.

Content

Website Link: <https://kiahheron.wixsite.com/softskills>

Home Page:

PROJECT SOFT SKILLS [Home](#) [Understand](#) [See](#) [Implement](#)

PROJECT SOFT SKILLS

HELPING TO BRING SOFT SKILLS INTO THE COLLEGIATE ENVIRONMENT

UNDERSTAND

Seek to understand what exactly soft skills are.

SEE

See where soft skills are important in every aspect of life.

IMPLEMENT

Learn how to foster soft skills in your own classroom

ABOUT US

Project Soft Skills is working towards the goal of making professors aware of the importance of soft skills, their responsibility to their students, and providing resources that help collegiate level instructors foster soft skills along with teaching their own curriculum.

It is very important that students possess good soft skills when they graduate. It is the responsibility of the universities to ensure that graduates have relevant skills to gain employment. Hence, soft skills development should be imbued into the curriculum of every classroom.

This website provides meaningful information and statistics on what soft skills are, their importance for college graduates, and how you can go about teaching them.

[CLICK TO SEE MY OWN RESEARCH](#)

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR QUESTIONS

Name Email

Phone

Message

[Let's Chat!](#)

Understand:

PROJECT SOFT SKILLS Home Understand See Implement

UNDERSTAND

This is where you, an educator, can learn exactly what soft skills are.

SOFT SKILLS

WHAT ARE SOFT SKILLS?

(HOVER OVER EACH BOX FOR MORE INFORMATION)

COMMUNICATION	ADAPTABILITY
Collaboration is working together with one or more people to effectively reach a common goal. Collaboration skills usually include the ability to read the emotional climate, apologize, listen, express a point of view, take another person's perspective and define mutual goals.	CREATIVITY
LEADERSHIP SKILLS	INTERPERSONAL SKILLS
WORK ETHIC	PROBLEM SOLVING SKILLS

Home Let's Chat! ↑

Sources: (Kerr, 2019) (Williams, 2019) (Roberts, 2017)

See:

PROJECT SOFT SKILLS Home Understand See Implement

SEE

Observe how soft skills are crucial for your students upon graduation and recognize the responsibility of college educators to foster these skills in class.

- THE SOFT SKILLS GAP**
What if the soft skills you need, how to use them, are not being taught?
- JOB RETENTION**
How do graduates soft skills help them in the professional world?
- EDUCATION & LIFE**
How learning soft skills are beneficial to students education?
- EDUCATOR RESPONSIBILITY**
The responsibility of college professors to teach soft skills.
- EDUCATOR BENEFITS**
The benefits to teaching soft skills in your classroom.

THE SOFT SKILLS GAP

WHY IS THERE A GAP?

There is a lack of specificity in terms of what and how soft skills should be taught in the first place.

This makes it incredibly difficult for teachers to incorporate them into curriculum built to transfer hard skills.

Brookings Institute Report

JOB RETENTION

RESEARCH

"Technical skills and knowledge account for about 15 percent of the reason an individual gets a job, keeps the job and advances in that job but the remaining 85 percent of job success is based on individual's soft skills."

— NISSA, 2019

EDUCATION & LIFE

BENEFITS IN LIFE

Outside of the professional world, soft skills are also important in personal success. Having soft skills makes you more proficient in communicating and adapting among other things, when dealing with personal relationships and partnerships.

BENEFITS IN EDUCATION

It is vital to student success that they learn how to navigate and overcome personal challenges, and have the social emotional skills to understand and work around issues they may face.

It is vital to student success that they learn how to navigate and overcome personal challenges, and have the social emotional skills to understand and work around issues they may face.

EDUCATOR RESPONSIBILITY

It is the responsibility of the universities to ensure that graduates have relevant skills to gain employment upon graduation and they should be combining both hard and soft skills in their curriculum. A large challenge for higher education professionals involves adapting instruction to accommodate providing students with skills that meet business and industry demands.

"FACULTY MEMBERS PREPARING FUTURE LEADERS MUST UNDERGO A TRANSFORMATION."

99% of executives answered YES when asked if the education system was to blame for the soft skills gap.

Higher education educators must learn to build soft skills coaching into their curriculum and teaching routines in order to prepare students for their future careers in any field.

EDUCATOR BENEFITS

- Interactive Classroom**
Active learning activities that improve soft skills also improve classroom environment and make student more engaged in the lesson.
- Learning Techniques**
When you get students up, moving, engaged, and talking, you give them a much better chance of learning, retaining, and succeeding.
- Better Students**
When students are able to listen attentively and comprehend what is being presented to them, it further enhances their ability to make further inquiries and respond appropriately.
- Fulfilling**
Part of teaching higher education is preparing your students for their future. It is rewarding to see that what you taught them in the classroom has helped them achieve their goals.

Let's Chat!

Sources: (Rainmaker Thinking Inc., 2016) (Davidson, 2016) (Whitehurst, 2016) (Bolton, 1986) (Musa, Mufi, Latiff, & Amin, 2012) (Ware, 2019) (Adecco, 2019) (Tulgan, Bridging the Millennial Soft Skills Gap, 2015) (Nealy, 2005)

Implement:

PROJECT SOFT SKILLS Home Understand See Implement

IMPLEMENT

Learn how to foster soft skills in your own classroom while teaching your own curriculum

TEACHING TECHNIQUES FOR FOSTERING ALL SOFT SKILLS

USE ACTIVE LEARNING STRATEGIES

Active learning is a teaching approach that has students search for meaning and hold responsibility. It has a concern with skills and knowledge and approaches curriculum from a wider career or social setting.

Active learning activities provide students an opportunity to develop soft skills.

The active learning process encouraged and allowed students to adapt, personalize and discover their own method for understanding course material.

To the right you can find many active learning techniques.

- brainstorming
- discussing
- teaching
- journaling
- group work
- focused listening
- formulating questions
- note taking
- annotating
- roleplaying

Lecturing is not an active learning technique!

TEACHING TECHNIQUES BY SKILL

<h3>CREATIVITY</h3> <p>There are many techniques, assignments and processes that can be used and taught to foster creativity in any discipline.</p> <p>READ MORE</p>	<h3>COLLABORATION</h3> <p>There are a few key things you can do in your classes to help foster collaboration along with giving students insight on what goes into an effective collaboration</p> <p>READ MORE</p>	<h3>TIME MANAGEMENT</h3> <p>Time management is one soft skill that is very independent, but there are ways you can structure your class to promote better time management practices.</p> <p>READ MORE</p>
<h3>LEADERSHIP</h3> <p>There are different assignments that can promote leadership more than others in a collegiate environment.</p> <p>READ MORE</p>	<h3>WORK ETHIC</h3> <p>By using different wording and types of assignments it can be easy to instill work ethic in your students with any discipline.</p> <p>READ MORE</p>	<h3>PROBLEM SOLVING</h3> <p>Fostering problem solving skills is all about the tasks you give your students and the goals that go with it. These are some tips on how you can design assignments to let them expand their problem solving abilities.</p> <p>READ MORE</p>
<h3>ADAPTABILITY</h3> <p>Students being able to adapt to their environment isn't always easy to teach, but you are able to provide an environment that gives them the ability to practice being adaptable hands on.</p> <p>READ MORE</p>	<h3>PERSUASION</h3> <p>There is an entire theory behind persuasion. By weaving it throughout your curriculum you are able to really foster this soft skill in your own classroom.</p> <p>READ MORE</p>	<h3>PUBLIC SPEAKING</h3> <p>One of the easiest soft skills to implement in class, here are some pointers on how to do it in an impactful way that teaches your students the real skills behind public speaking.</p> <p>READ MORE</p>
<h3>INTERPERSONAL SKILLS</h3> <p>This is another field with so much theory behind how to have effective interpersonal skills. In your own class there are many strategies you can use to teach your students about what those skills may look like and giving them the opportunity to use them.</p> <p>READ MORE</p>	<h3>SELF AWARENESS</h3> <p>This is more of a personal soft skill, but there are many strategies that can be used in the classroom to help students improve this skill.</p> <p>READ MORE</p>	<h3>CONFLICT RESOLUTION</h3> <p>A very important skill to have in the classroom, there are many ways you can improve on students ability to resolve conflict and utilize this in your teachings.</p> <p>READ MORE</p>

Let's Chat

Sources: (Leibiger, 2019) (Briggs, 2015) (Clifford, 2012)

Teaching Collaboration:

PROJECT SOFT SKILLS Home Understand See Implement

TEACHING COLLABORATION

Teaching and fostering specifically collaboration as a soft skill in a collegiate classroom is different from teaching soft skills as a whole. Collaboration is a skill that is proven to be useful across disciplines and is more easily implemented and beneficial in a classroom setting.

"Working with others to share ideas, take a point of view, defend a position, give and accept feedback, achieve consensus, and apply knowledge to a common goal leads to improved teaching and learning"

There are so many things conspire people in the "opposite direction toward competition, complacency, defensiveness, or disregard for the collective body". To have the desire to and ability to collaborate, most people need their minds and mouths to be retained. In our society, there isn't much in our overall culture that develops people into collaborators; it takes effort to discover the deeper benefits of collaboration and teach students to unlearn the attitudes and behaviors that undermine it.

DEVELOP A CLIMATE CONDUCTIVE TO COLLABORATION

Collaboration thrives in an environment in which the school leader has developed a climate conducive to collaboration. Morel, in her article about promoting collaborative practices explains that there are three essential elements for creating that environment.

- 1. Involvement in significant work**
 - When pairs or teams work together, the goal must be worthwhile and the expectations must be high.
 - Busy work, work that is not taken seriously by leaders, does not lead to effective collaboration.
- 2. Trust**
 - Trust is the most important component of collaboration.
 - High-stakes, highly competitive structures, over-direction or micromanagement, secrecy, and lack of transparency undermine trust among faculty members. Principals must work to create a climate of respect and trust.
 - This does not happen overnight, and it starts with a positive example set by the leadership.
- 3. Consistent Processes**
 - Consistent team processes provide identified roles, discussion protocols, and agreed-upon norms that lead to productive dialogue.
 - Effective meeting or learning protocols begin by reviewing norms or agreements for interaction, setting a time to begin and end, and making personal connections.
 - This process shows mutual concern for everyone's needs and emphasizes the importance of the relationship.


PROJECT BASED LEARNING

Project based learning is a very effective way to develop collaboration as a soft skill in a classroom setting.

When students are able to listen attentively and comprehend what is being presented to them, it further enhances their ability to make further inquiries and respond appropriately.

Students also learn to become assertive in group context when they learn and practice to express and exchange their ideas.

The students also learn that good teamwork contributes to a successful outcome of a project.



Group work may be a part of project based learning, but it is very important that as a professor you don't assign a group project with no more guidance than passing out the materials needed. The grouping of students should be carefully planned like any other part of the lesson. Once students are grouped, the expectations for how they work together must be taught, practiced, and assessed.

POST TESTS AND PRE TESTS

A unexpected way to foster collaboration would be to have students engage in a pre and post-test with your own class content.

An assessment gives the team a goal to work towards and ensures learning is a priority. It also allows instructors to gauge the effectiveness of the group.

Changes can be made if differences are seen in the assessments over time.

Individuals should also complete surveys evaluating how well the group functioned. "Debriefing" is an important component of the learning process and allows individuals to reflect on the process of group learning.

ESTABLISH GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Rather than just lecturing, in order to foster collaboration you can establish group interactions with discussions during class-time.

This helps teach students how to effectively collaborate by showing them and giving them the opportunity to share ideas, work together to achieve the goal of the conversation and be able to share leadership along with developing roles in conversation.

The best way for group interactions to teach collaboration is to have a specific goal of the conversation. You can do this by asking a group question after a lecture or asking the class to reach on consensus about a controversial topic in the lecture. Some other examples are to the right.

Initiate Discussions About:

- Clarifying points
- Summarizing
- Challenging assumptions
- Play devil's advocate
- Providing or researching information
- Reaching a consensus

Sources: (Clifford, 2012) (Morel, 2014) (Musa, Mufi, Latiff, & Amin, 2012)

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