

DEVELOPING TEAMWORK SKILLS IN HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT COLLEGE STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Teamwork skills are among the most important skills desired by hospitality management employment recruiters, yet, teamwork skills are frequently deficient in college graduates. The purpose of this study was to determine whether hospitality management college students who participated in a team project with the same small group of students for one 10-week academic quarter along with teamwork training or a review of successful teamwork skills, and feedback about their teamwork skills improved their teamwork skills. An online teamwork skills questionnaire was administered to students in an introductory, and an upper division hospitality management course before and after the 10-week courses. The introductory hospitality management course contained teamwork training and the upper division course provided a review of successful teamwork skills, and in both the introductory and upper division courses, students worked on a small group team project, and received feedback on teamwork skills throughout the 10-week period. Paired t-tests were used to compare the students' pre- and post-teamwork questionnaire scores in the introductory and upper division courses, and a t-test was used to compare the students' pre-teamwork questionnaire scores in the introductory course with the students' post-teamwork questionnaire scores in the upper division course. Statistical analysis revealed students' teamwork scores improved significantly from before the introductory to after the introductory hospitality management 10-week course, and from before the upper division to after the upper division hospitality management 10-week course, and students' teamwork scores improved from before the introductory hospitality management course to after the upper division hospitality management course when students were provided teamwork training in the introductory course and a review of successful teamwork in the upper division course, worked on a small group team project, and received feedback on teamwork skills over 10-weeks in the introductory and upper division hospitality management courses. These findings suggest hospitality management students' teamwork skills can be improved with teamwork training or a review of successful teamwork practices, the opportunity to work on a team project with a small team, and teamwork feedback over a 10-week period.

Keywords: Teamwork¹, Hospitality Management², Hospitality Management Employment³, Teamwork Skills⁴

INTRODUCTION

Teamwork skills are important for students to develop while in college to obtain a hospitality management position as well as to be successful in a hospitality management career (The Conference Board, 2008; Mayburry & Swagger, 2010). Yet, little research has been conducted to determine if college students are trained in teamwork, participate in teamwork, and are provided feedback on their teamwork skills improve their teamwork skills.

The purpose of this study was to determine whether hospitality management college students who participated in a team project with the same small team of students for one 10-week academic quarter along with teamwork training or a review of successful teamwork practices, and self, peer, and instructor feedback about their teamwork skills improved their teamwork skills.

In this study, hospitality management college students in an introductory, and upper division course were given a task appropriate for a team to complete. Teamwork training was provided in the introductory course, and a review of how to work successfully in a team was provided in the upper division course. Following, students in both courses worked in teams of 3-6 members on a 10-week project. Each student was provided with self, peer, and instructor feedback about his/her teamwork skills throughout the 10-week project. At the beginning and end of each course, students participated in an online teamwork questionnaire to assess change in students' teamwork skills during the 10-week period, and from the beginning of the introductory course until the end of the upper division course.

Team Versus Group

Instructors often use the terms team and group interchangeably but they are not the same. Kozlowski and Ilgen (2006) provide a multifaceted definition of a team as "(a) two or more individuals who (b) socially interact (face-to-face or, increasingly, virtually); (c) possess one or more common goals; (d) are brought together to perform organizationally relevant tasks; (e) exhibit interdependencies with respect to workflow, goals, and outcomes; (f) have different roles and responsibilities; and (g) are together embedded in an encompassing organizational system, with boundaries and linkages to the broader system context and task environment."

Teams are not just a group working together (Katzenbach & Smith, 1993, 2005). Teams rely on collaboration among team members to create a product that is more than the sum of the individual parts, and are comprised of individuals with complementary skills and abilities. Further, team members hold themselves responsible for the quality of the final product.

Groups, on the other hand, are commonly defined as a collection of two or more interactive individuals with a stable pattern of relationships between them who share common goals and who perceive themselves as being a group (Greenberg, 2010, p. 252).

Groups do not rely on collaboration among team members. Rather, group members often work alone, and then combine their individual parts to produce the final product. In comparison to team members, group members often have similar skill levels in relation to the assigned task, and hold themselves

responsible only for their part of the project.

Teamwork Defined

Teamwork involves people working collaboratively together as a team for a common goal or purpose (Southern Cross University, 2013).

Teamwork Skills and Employment

The Department of Education, Science and Training (2006) identified a set of skills needed to prepare young people for both employment and further learning. Teamwork was listed as one of eight skills employers think makes a good employee. It is described as being able to work in a team in a manner that contributes to productive working relationships and outcomes. The aspects of teamwork that employers think are important to enter, operate, and thrive in the world of work are:

Working with people of different ages, genders, races, religions or political persuasions
Working as an individual and as a member of a team
Knowing how to define a role as part of a team
Applying teamwork to a range of situations
Identifying the strengths of team members
Coaching, mentoring, and giving feedback.

Teamwork in Organization

Teamwork of some type is utilized in most, if not all organizations today (Hills, 2001; Koslowski & Bell, 2003; Jex, 2002; Lawler, et al., 1995; Morgeson, et al., 2010). A survey of 240 managers attending a University of Wisconsin's continuing education program noted that managers are typically serving on 3 teams at any given time, and several managers agreed that it was not uncommon for managers to be on twelve different teams simultaneously (Antonioni, 1996). Blanchard, et al., (1996) also provided evidence that showed managers spend from 60% to 90% of their time in team activities. Moreover, employees are likely to work in different types of teams including project teams, action teams, production teams, and management teams.

As a result of the prevalence of teams in work organizations, companies are increasingly seeking job candidates who possess teamwork skills.

Both employers and recruiters listed college graduates' ability to work in a team as critical to compete for jobs. A report by The Conference Board (2008) noted that prospective employers listed teamwork/collaboration as second in importance to only oral communications of eleven applied skills required for job success for four-year college graduates. College recruiting professional members of the National Association of Colleges and Employers (2013) rated "ability to work in a team structure" as the most important of ten candidate skills/qualities in the Job Outlook 2014 survey.

The ability to work as part of a team was ranked by senior hiring executives who represented various sectors of the hospitality and tourism industry as the most desired attribute of eleven skills and

abilities for college and university graduates of business and hospitality education programs too (Tesone & Ricci, 2005). In another study (Mayburry & Swagger, 2010), twenty two leading experts in hospitality management listed team building as one of the knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSA's) from their experience and observation that graduates from four year post-secondary institutions currently needed to possess for success in the hospitality industry.

In the American Management Association's (AMA) (2013) 2012 Critical Skills Survey, managers and executives indicated that collaboration/team building was one of four skills measured during annual performance appraisals and that job applicants were assessed in these areas during the hiring process. Nearly seventy three percent (72.6%) of managers and executives agreed or strongly agreed that collaboration/team building was a priority for employee development, talent management, and succession planning in the next one to three years. Three fourths (74.6%) of managers and executives who responded to the AMA survey said they believed collaboration/team building skills will become more important to their organizations in the next three to five years for four reasons. Listed from most important to least important, they are 1) the pace of change in business, 2) global competition, 3) the nature of how work is achieved today, and 4) the way organizations are structured. The AMA 2012 Critical Skills Survey showed almost sixty percent (59.1%) of managers and executives believed it is easier to develop these skills in students and recent graduates than it is to develop them in experienced workers. These results substantiate the need for college educators to develop collaboration/teamwork skills in students.

While teamwork skills are valued at all levels of employment, they may become increasingly evident and important as positions of seniority are attained in organizations (Hughes & Jones, 2011).

Teamwork in Management Education

Management instructors often use team activities to accomplish a number of educational goals and to get students to be more involved in their education than in traditional course work (Loyd, et al., 2005; Raelin, 2006; Zantow, et al., 2005). Instructors also use team based learning methods to develop the interpersonal and teamwork skills that students often do not have, yet, are very important in organizations and to recruiters (Alsop, 2002; Boni, et al., 2009; Verzat, et al., 2009).

Benefits of Teamwork Skills

Johnson and Johnson (1989) believe learning to work together in teams may be one of the most important interpersonal skills a person can develop in order to gain employment, be productive, and achieve career success. The importance of colleges and universities implementing strategies designed to help students develop teamwork skills was further substantiated in a 2013 poll conducted on behalf of the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AACU) in which 67% of employers said colleges should place more emphasis on teamwork skills and the ability to collaborate with others in diverse group settings (Hart Research Associates, 2013, p.8).

Further, The Association of American Colleges and Universities (AACU) listed collaborative assignments and projects as one of eleven widely tested teaching and learning practices that provide value to college students, especially to students from historically underserved backgrounds in its report, *College Learning for the New Global Century* (National Leadership Council for Liberal Education and America's Promise, 2007). They noted in Appendix A, *A Guide to Effective Educational Practices* (p.54) that "Collaborative learning combines two key goals: learning to work and solve problems in the company of others, and sharpening one's own understanding by listening seriously to the insights of others, especially those with different backgrounds and life experiences. Approaches range from forming study groups within a course, to team-based assignments and writing, to cooperative projects and research."

Chapman and Van Auken (2001) explained that it is believed students develop a better understanding of the difficulties, challenges, and rewards of working together in teams through team projects. They noted that there are several other benefits students will gain by working on team projects. They can help students to:

Become better communicators

Learn to work productively with others

Develop a better understanding of the complexities, challenges, and advantages of working effectively in a team

Gain skills in managing group projects

Recognize the value provided by the division of labor when working on a large project

Simulate experiences similar to the "real world" ones they will encounter when they are assigned to a team as part of an organization.

Chapman and Van Auken (2001) also indicated that students interviewing for jobs are often asked to explain how they handled problems when working on team projects.

Kuh (2008) listed teamwork and problem solving in his book, *High-Impact Educational Practices* as one of eight intellectual and practical skills students need to prepare for twenty-first-century challenges. His listing was developed through a multiyear dialogue with hundreds of colleges and universities about needed goals for student learning; analysis of a long series of recommendations and reports from the business community; and analysis of the accreditation requirements for engineering, business, nursing, and teacher education. Kuh indicated collaborative assignments and projects are techniques that educators may use to strengthen students' intellectual and practical skills. They have been shown to help many college students from a variety of backgrounds.

Educators Development of Students' Teamwork Skills

Many faculty members in higher education do recognize the educational benefits of group-based learning, and the need for students to develop team skills, and include team projects in their classes (Boni, et al., 2009; Michaelsen, et al., 2004). Nevertheless, the quality of students' team experiences is often not as good as it could or should be (Pfaff, & Huddleston, 2003), and teamwork competencies and skills are rarely developed (Chen, et al., 2004).

Helping students to develop team skills is not easy even when university and college instructors and professors incorporate team experiences into their courses. There are many reasons why students may not develop good team skills in college. Students often find teamwork challenging and struggle with it. Other reasons students may not develop good team skills include the following: they divide the project into parts and complete their parts individually; there is poor communication or conflict among team members, and some students would rather work alone, dislike group work, or lack interpersonal skills (Shankar & Seow, 2010). Loafers, who contribute little to the team, are also commonplace in student teams (McCorkle et al., 1999), and, as a result, gain minimal teamwork experience. Students may grow frustrated and resentful of shirking team members (Comer, 1995) and fear their individual grades will be affected by working on a team project or that the work will not be divided equally among team members (Jassawalla, et al., 2009; Oakley, et al., 2004). Another concern of students is that team work is too time-consuming due to the time required to schedule meetings and the time spent attending meetings that aren't always as productive as they could be.

The development of teamwork skills requires faculty to teach students what it means to be an effective teammate, provide students with opportunities to work in teams, offer feedback to students about their teamwork skills and give them the opportunity to practice their teamwork skills again (Fink, 2003).

Training Students to be Effective Teammates

Training students in teamwork may teach them how to be better team players, resulting in better teamwork experiences (Bacon, et al., 1999). A course on teamwork might be added to the curriculum or shorter teamwork lessons might be incorporated into a variety of courses that offer team learning activities.

Bradley, et al., (2003) and Young and Henquinet (2000) also found teamwork training can increase students' team satisfaction with team performance. Team members' satisfaction is important to a team's productivity. Lovell and Nunnery (2004) found that team member's satisfaction was almost as critical to a team's productivity as team performance. Likewise, Ocker's (2002) research showed that satisfied, cohesive teams performed better. Research by Lembke & Wilson (1998) also indicated that the effectiveness and productivity of teams can be improved by team members who view the team as a unit and an attractive arrangement.

Teamwork training may address topics such as the stages of group development, communication within a group, roles that group members can play, and conflict resolution. Describing past experiences with

team failures and successes may be used to discuss appropriate behavior in a team.

Feedback on Teamwork Skills

In order for students to improve their teamwork skills they need to receive meaningful feedback about the quality of their teamwork skills. Hughes and Jones (2011) indicate feedback needs to focus on the teamwork process that was used to create the project rather than on the quality of the project's outcomes. While students need to share a group grade based on the quality of the team's final project to ensure their commitment to the collaboration, it is not enough to help students improve their teamwork skills. Feedback must be provided on the quality of the team process. This is the basis for the individual grade. Students' individual contributions must also be rewarded. Feedback may come from students' peers who are likely to see their teamwork skills in action or from instructors or professors who may see their teamwork skills in a more limited manner. Irrespective of the source, feedback about teamwork performance is essential for students to improve their teamwork skills, and faculty must plan for it to take place (Hughes & Jones, 2011).

Studies (Thomas, et al., 2011) have supported using self and peer evaluations as a method to provide students feedback about their teamwork contributions. Self and peer evaluations can teach students about teamwork; encourage students to reflect on team processes, their own team contributions and their teammates' contributions; and provide students with developmental feedback (Dominick, et al., 1997; Gueldenzoph & May, 2002). For these reasons, self and peer evaluations can help students learn to be more effective team members (Brutus & Donia, 2010; Oakley, et al., 2004).

Providing students with peer evaluation instruments and explaining them before student teams begin working as a team, teaches students what is expected of them and what behaviors are acceptable and unacceptable in team members, and can help teams to develop shared expectations for team members (Ohland et al., 2012). Gueldenzoph & May (2002) note that students must be provided a clear understanding about the 1) Who (Which students will evaluate them?), 2) What (What does the evaluation include?), 3) When (When will the evaluation take place?), 4) Why (Why are peers performing the evaluation?), 5) How (How will peer evaluations affect their grades?). Answers to these questions are necessary in order for students to evaluate their peers effectively, and feel like the evaluation process is fair.

Self and peer evaluations may also be used to provide students feedback to increase their team skills and develop reflective and self-management skills which help them become lifelong learners (Dochy, et al., 1999; Felder & Brent, 2007; Young & Henquinet, 2000).

In addition to showing students how their team contributions will be evaluated, self and peer evaluations can motivate students to contribute to their teams, increase the amount students' grades reflect their contributions to team assignments, and reduce free riding. Team members who free-ride causing other students to do more work or get a lower grade than they want is a primary

reason students are dissatisfied with teamwork (Oakley, et al., 2004; Pfaff & Huddleston, 2003).

Hernandez (2002); Millis & Cottell (1998) also noted that peer evaluations create accountability to team members and provide a reason for contributing to a team's efforts to reach its goals. Likewise, Bacon (2005) determined failure to implement individual accountability in team activities can reduce student learning. Further, peer evaluations make students conscious of how their peers view them, and according to Mayo, et al., (2012) this can lead to greater self-awareness and encourage learning.

Because self and peer evaluations are often used in work organizations, completing them as part of college classes prepares students for the workplace (Druskat & Wolff, 1999).

Chapman and Van Auken (2001) and Pfaff & Huddleston, (2003) found students were more likely to have positive attitudes toward teamwork if instructors discussed team management concerns and individual performance within a team was evaluated, such as by a peer evaluation. Attitudes of students can perform a critical function in learning and the quality of the results (Marzano, 1992). Glazer, et al., (1987) further determined that teams with a positive attitude toward their assignments performed better. Lembke and Wilson (1998) also found that "teamwork is a function of how team members perceive the team and their role in it. Highly productive teamwork requires that team members recognize the team as a unit and as an attractive work arrangement" (p. 927). Basically, the above research indicates that the effectiveness and efficiency of teams can be improved when team members working in a team have a positive attitude.

METHOD

Forty six students in an introductory and thirty four students in an upper division hospitality management 10-week college course participated in an online Teamwork Skills Assessment (Spector, et al., 2005) at the beginning of the 10-week courses. The Teamwork Skills Questionnaire was established as a reliable and valid teamwork assessment tool. The teamwork questionnaire was comprised of 36 questions. A sample question is, "When I work as part of a team, I respect the thoughts and opinions of others in the team." Response choices to each question were, "Almost never=1, Sometimes=2, Often=3, and Almost always=4."

Teamwork training was provided to students in the introductory hospitality management course with a power point presentation, discussion, and several handouts. The discussion and handouts addressed the team development stages, team norms, communication within a team, conflict resolution, student advice on how to work in a team, a team expectation agreement form with expectations for teams to agree to, and a self & peer evaluation scoring rubric for students to evaluate themselves and their team members. Students in the upper division course received a review of how to work successfully in a team, and a self & peer evaluation scoring rubric for students to evaluate themselves and their team members.

Teams of three to six students were identified. Teams in the introductory 3 hour and 20 minute 10-week course were assigned a menu and recipe costing project with numerous parts due in stages

throughout the 10-week period. Teams in the upper division course participated in a 30 hour/week 10-week management team project operating a hands-on student run restaurant serving four lunches or three dinners to the public each week during 7 of the 10 weeks.

Students in both courses received self, peer, and instructor written feedback on their teamwork skills throughout the 10 week period.

At the end of the 10 week period, the students in the introductory and upper division courses repeated the 36 question online Teamwork Skills Questionnaire.

This research project received Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from the California Polytechnic University, Pomona Human Research Protections Program.

RESULTS

The introductory and upper division hospitality management 10-week courses were statistically analyzed to determine the mean scores on the pre- and post-teamwork questionnaires for both courses, and if there were significant differences in the scores on the pre- and post-teamwork questionnaires using paired t-tests. The mean score for the pre-teamwork questionnaire in the introductory course was 3.2440, and the mean score for the post-teamwork questionnaire was 3.3484. The mean score for the pre-teamwork questionnaire in the upper division course was 3.2933 and the mean score for the post-teamwork questionnaire was 3.5082. The results were as expected (Fink, 2003). There were significant differences on the paired t-tests in both courses. The post-teamwork questionnaire scores were statistically higher (or better) than the pre-teamwork questionnaire scores in both the introductory and upper division hospitality management courses when students completed teamwork training in the introductory course and a review of teamwork skills in the upper division course followed by participation in a 10-week team project with self, peer, and instructor feedback throughout the 10-week period in both courses. The results of the paired t-test in the introductory course showed significant improvement in teamwork scores with a $p = 0.0455$. The results of the paired t-test in the upper division course showed significant improvement in teamwork scores with a $p = 0.0009$.

The pre-teamwork questionnaire scores from the introductory course and the post-teamwork questionnaire scores from the upper division course were also analyzed to determine if there was a significant difference in these scores using a t-test. There was a significant difference on the t-test from the students' pre-teamwork questionnaire scores in the introductory course and the students' upper division post-teamwork questionnaire scores. Students' scores on the post-teamwork questionnaire from the upper division course were significantly higher than the students' scores on the pre-teamwork questionnaire from the introductory course. The results showed a significant improvement in students' teamwork scores from prior to the introductory course to after they completed the upper division course with a $p = 0.0044$.

DISCUSSION/CONCLUSIONS

The results of this study indicate that students will improve their teamwork skills if faculty teach students how to be an effective teammate, provide students with opportunities to work in teams, offer feedback to students about their teamwork skills and give them the opportunity to practice their teamwork skills again. The sample size of the courses was small, with $n=46$ in the introductory course and $n=34$ in the upper division course. This was a limitation of the study. Nonetheless, the significant differences found indicate faculty can improve students' teamwork skills by providing students the combination of teamwork training, team project opportunities, and feedback.

While there was a significant difference in students' pre- and post-teamwork questionnaire scores ($p = 0.0455$) in the introductory course, an indication that students' teamwork skills improved, the improvement could have been greater. There are several factors that may have attributed to this. They include: 1) Students only met 3 hours and 20 minutes/week for 10-weeks in the introductory course. 2) Two thirds of the students in the introductory course took it as a hybrid course. A hybrid course meets face-to-face only half the time with the remaining meetings being conducted online. 3) The teamwork skills of the students were quite high prior to beginning the introductory course, rating 3.2739 with 4.0 as the highest score possible. 4) Other reasons Shankar and Seow (2010) noted are that students in the introductory course may not have improved their team skills more because they divided the project into parts and completed their parts individually; there was poor communication or conflict among team members, and some students preferred to work alone, disliked group work, or lacked interpersonal skills. 5) Furthermore, students may have grown frustrated and resentful of shirking team members (Comer, 1995), and feared their individual grades would be affected by working on a team project, or that the work wouldn't be divided equally among team members (Jassawalla, et al., 2009; Oakley, et al., 2004). 6) Another concern of students was that team work was too time-consuming due to the time required to schedule meetings and the time spent attending meetings that weren't always as productive as they could be.

Students' teamwork skills in the upper division course improved greatly as demonstrated by the significant difference in students' pre- and post-teamwork questionnaire scores ($p = 0.0009$). There are several factors that may have contributed to the substantial improvement in students' teamwork skills while in the upper division course. They include: 1) The upper division course was a capstone course culminating students' participation in numerous teamwork projects in their lower and intermediate level hospitality management courses. 2) Students in the upper division course met 30 hours/week for 10-weeks versus the 3 hours and 20minute/ week in a traditional hospitality management course. 3) The teamwork project in the upper division hospitality management course was operating a restaurant open to the public for 4 lunch or 3 dinner periods each week. This provided students with a "real" operational hands-on business experience.

Given that teamwork skills are important for students to develop while in college to obtain a hospitality management position as well as to be successful in a hospitality management career (The Conference Board, 2008; Mayburry & Swagger, 2010), this study shows providing hospitality management college students with teamwork training, along with an opportunity to practice teamwork

skills and receive feedback about them will enable students to improve their teamwork skills. Since teamwork of some type is utilized in most, if not all organizations today (Hills, 2001; Koslowski & Bell, 2003; Jex, 2002; Lawler, et al., 1995; Morgeson, et al., 2010), and teamwork skills are valued at all levels of employment, (Hughes & Jones, 2011), the findings of this study may be useful to educators in many disciplines. Further research is recommended.

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