

Assignment 1

Individual report

Student: Antoaneta Andreeva-Metodieva

Student number: 2215257

Academic skills

Dr Lizeta Demetriou

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Introduction

Teamwork is an essential skill needed for one's success in academic, professional and social life.

Simply said, teamwork relates to the ability of group of people from different backgrounds to work together towards completion of a common task. In general, it relates to the ability of a team to create a positive working environment, connect with each other and acknowledge the strengths and skills of each individual (Indeed, 2022).

Working with others, however, can be challenging and takes time and effort to build good balance and relationships between the participants. Different personalities would need adjustment in order to fit well in the group. A well-established team can be compared to a machine where all parts fit in their required position and work together in unison.

In this report, we will concentrate on academic teamwork, get a more detailed description of different roles within the team and discuss the benefits and problems in working with others as outlined by McMillan and Weyers (2012) in their "Study Skills Book".

Team roles in an academic setting

The Study Skills Book (McMillan, Weyers, 2012, p.104) suggests that "there are many distinct team personalities and that each of us has a 'natural' team role". Through practice, participants could discover which role best suits their personality. In cases where several participants share similar strengths, the need of taking on a different role could arise. Members of smaller teams may need to adopt more than one role at a time or change positions during the progress of their project.

Despite the challenges of having to work outside your comfort area, over time this could help develop different skills and broaden your suitability to a wider range of roles within the team. Finding new strengths and developing new skills can influence your future career choice.

According to Study Skills Handbook (Cottrell, 2019), there are four general roles within the group:

- A chairperson – a person who ensures all members share their ideas, summarises an action plan and ensures team members are on track at all times;
- Timekeeper – observes time management, ensures tasks are completed within a planned time frame, allocated time for member contributions;
- Record keeper or secretary – the person who keeps a record of allocated tasks and decisions.
- Task or project manager – the person who observes that members work on their allocated tasks between meetings;

Commented [AAM1]: Indeed (2022), The Advantages of Working in a Team: 11 Aspects to Consider available at: <https://uk.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/advantages-of-working-in-a-team>, accessed: 15th November 2022

Commented [AAM2]: McMillan, K. & Weyers, J. (2012) *The Study Skills Book* 3rd edition. Essex: Pearson

Commented [AAM3]: Cottrell, S. (2019), *The Study Skills Handbook* 5th edition. London: Red Globe Press.

The successful completion of a group task requires equal commitment from all members. To avoid conflict within the team tasks should be shared fairly, participants should approach each other with respect, compassion, and responsibility.

Teamwork skills

The ability to work in a team consists of several interrelated **skills** as suggested by McMillan (2012):

- **Communication** – essential for the successful completion of the task, requirements should be clearly communicated by the person assigning the task to the team. Team members need to be able to communicate and delegate different aspects of the objective between participants. They should discuss time frames for completion and define member roles as well as arrange meetings for tracking progress and discussing arising issues;
- **Time management** – team members should ensure deadlines are met by setting-up time frames for different phases of the project. Frequent communication and timely progress tracking are essential to meeting the teams' goal;
- **Compromise** - For a team to function, cooperation between members is essential, and may necessitate self-awareness and adaptability. Everyone on a team must be able to offer and take in constructive criticism without taking it personally. It may be necessary for idealists to accept that certain facets of what the team does fall below their usual norms, but this is required to ensure the team's mission is met;
- **Focus and commitment** - Tasks in teamwork are frequently time- and labour-intensive; for the utmost standards to be reached, everyone must demonstrate dedication and an efficient work rate. The team must maintain focus on its aims and objectives to ensure that they are met; otherwise, the group's overall grade may suffer;

Commented [AAM4]: McMillan, K. (2012) The study skills book, 3rd ed., Pearson Education

Benefits of teamwork

The opportunity to work in a team is an essential part of academic life. It is a powerful method for acquiring knowledge and new skills both from academic literature and other team members. Teamwork is also highly relevant to students' future workplace.

According to Cottrell (2019), there are several reasons for promoting teamwork in academic life. Learning communities help students share knowledge and support each other. Different points of view help students evaluate information from different perspectives. Learning strengths – providing an alternative study environment for students who learn better through interaction with others. Cohort effect – well-established teams are likely to perform better, stimulating each other to succeed in their chosen course. Working in a group can also enhance graduate skills, highly benefitting employability later in life.

Teamwork challenges

Individualistic team members require careful task management and a leader can help identify imbalances and make fast adjustments. Competence overlap can result in tension and unfair rivalry, while a lack of clarity can result in unrelated tasks. Building trust among members is essential for team performance. Establishing behavioural rules for participants can reduce the likelihood of repetitive conflicts, opposing objectives, and personality conflicts. Regular monitoring and mediation could help in reducing these conflicts.

In teamwork, it is crucial to consider internal rivalry, psychological differences, the concealing of information, and a lack of communication. Effective leadership and a unified approach to projects are essential for addressing these issues. Team leaders should encourage communication and foster an atmosphere where members are able to express themselves freely (Indeed, 2023).

Conclusion

Based on all said so far, teamwork can be described as the capacity of people to collaborate for the purpose of achieving shared objectives and responsibilities. There are a variety of factors and skills necessary for effective collaboration. At a fundamental level, it is crucial that the team has an objective and plan for achieving its targets, and that every member has the drive and enthusiasm to contribute at the highest levels possible. Whereas it is not always possible for members to be given a task within their area of expertise, members can have the opportunity to learn new things by having to perform outside their comfort zone. To guarantee productivity, team members must feel a sense of proprietorship over the project. Intelligent leadership is essential for successful teams to function properly. Team relationships should be established in a manner that enables the achievement of superior results. Commitment and dedication are essential, while shared values can be used to foster a feeling of trust and confidence.

A successful team should eliminate any personal barriers by concentrating on outcomes and valuing the opinions of each member.

Commented [AAM5]: Indeed Career Guide (2023) 13 teamwork challenges in the workplace and how to solve them available at: <https://uk.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/teamwork-challenges>, accessed: 29th April 2023

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