



TEAMWORK IN THE WORKPLACE: PERCEPTIONS OF STUDENTS AND EMPLOYERS

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PEOPLE AS COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

- employees are critical in creating competitive advantage
- skills development is one of the most prominent factors in this regard (Oosthuizen and Kara, 2008) .

Different views regarding the skills required ...

Macleán and Ordonez (2007)

argued that the required skills set for jobs is changing so rapidly that *employers are looking more for trainable recruits* (rather than recruits trained for specific employment) *with **generic employability skills sets***, such as flexibility, a quickness of learning, and persuasive communication and **teamwork**

Smith & Kruger (2008)

'graduates are entering a more flexible, insecure and technology-dependent workplace than ever before' and therefore ***need very specific skills required by the workplace*** in the 21st century

Clarke, 2008

Importance of a broad range of ***personal and transferable skills*** that facilitates the employment of individuals in the 21st century

SKILLS REQUIRED OF EMPLOYEES

13-year research project of Greenwood, Edge and Hodgetts (1987) identified the skills that managers expect from graduates.

1. the ability to communicate
2. the ability to analyse data, to propose solutions and to make decisions
3. the ability to plan, to organise and to coordinate
4. the ability to work effectively with others

WHY IS TEAMWORK IMPORTANT?

- I. **Teams touch our lives everyday** and their effectiveness is important to well-being across a wide range of societal functions. There is over 50 years of psychological research—literally thousands of studies—focused on understanding and influencing the processes that underlie team effectiveness.

WHY IS TEAMWORK IMPORTANT?

- II. **Productivity improves when people worked as a team.** Interest in the relationship between human factors and productivity can be traced as far back as the 1920s. Elton Mayo, in his classic Hawthorne studies of the 1930s, found that the most significant factor was a sense of group identity; the feeling of support and cohesion that came with increased worker interaction.
- III. **Organizational transformation** - teamwork is one of the most widely recommended tools. Initiatives such as business process redesign, total quality management or new product development almost always depend on effective and high-energy group efforts.
- IV. **Work** - Designing work around autonomous or semi autonomous teams has become a fact of organizational life.

(Cascio,1995;Hackman,1990; Manz & Sims, 1993).

WHY IS TEAMWORK IMPORTANT?

V. Globalization of the world's workforce

Stephen Drew and Colin Coulson-Thomas (1997), identified the “new organization” as an outcome of the growth of teamwork at the global level.

This development will be accompanied by new organizational forms and ways of working, based on networks and clusters of skills, crossing boundaries with suppliers, customers and even competitors.

Drew, Stephen, Colin Coulson-Thomas, (1997) "Transformation through teamwork: the path to the new organization?", Team Performance Management, Vol. 3 Iss: 3, pp.162 - 178

GROWING DEMAND FOR WORKFORCE WITH TEAMWORK SKILLS

Top Ten Things Employers Look for in New College Graduates (2007)

- 1. The ability to work well in teams—especially with people different from yourself**
2. An understanding of science and technology and how these subjects are used in real-world settings
3. The ability to write and speak well
4. The ability to think clearly about complex problems
5. The ability to analyze a problem to develop workable solutions
6. An understanding of global context in which work is now done
7. The ability to be creative and innovative in solving problems
8. The ability to apply knowledge and skills in new settings
9. The ability to understand numbers and statistics
10. A strong sense of ethics and integrity

GROWING DEMAND FOR WORKFORCE WITH TEAMWORK SKILLS

21 st Century Survey (2008)	NACE (2009)	AMA (2010)
Oral Communications	Communications	Communications
Teamwork	Teamwork	Collaboration/Teamwork
Ethics/Social Responsibility	Analytical	Critical Thinking/Problem Solving
Professionalism	Technical	Creativity/Innovation
Reading Comprehension	Strong Work Ethic	

American Management Association (AMA). (2010). *Executives say the 21st century requires more skilled workers*. Retrieved from <http://www.p21.org/documents/CriticalSkillsSurveyExecutiveSummary.pdf>

National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE). (November 2009). *NACE research report: Job outlook 2010*. Online. <http://www.nacweb.org>.

Partnership for 21st Century Skills. (2008). *21st Century skills, education & competitiveness: A resource and policy guide*. Tucson: Partnership for 21st Century Skills [http://www.p21.org/documents/21st century skills_education_and_competitiveness_guide.pdf](http://www.p21.org/documents/21st_century_skills_education_and_competitiveness_guide.pdf)

GROWING DEMAND FOR WORKFORCE WITH TEAMWORK SKILLS

The 10 Skills Employers Most Want In **2015 Graduates** (in order of importance)

NACE Annual Survey of Employers

1. **Ability to work in a team structure**
2. Ability to make decisions and solve problems (tie)
3. Ability to communicate verbally with people inside and outside an organization
4. Ability to plan, organize and prioritize work
5. Ability to obtain and process information
6. Ability to analyze quantitative data
7. Technical knowledge related to the job
8. Proficiency with computer software programs
9. Ability to create and/or edit written reports
10. Ability to sell and influence others

THE REALITY

Group skills are valued by employers and, the experience of participating in group projects as a student, transfers effectively to career activities (Colbeck, Campbell, & Bjorklund, 2000; Coleman 1996).

Many employers believe that higher education is failing in its role to adequately develop needed skills in students.

Partnership for 21st Century Skills (2006) and American Management Association's (AMA) 2010

THE REALITY

Significant gaps between students' opinions of their team experiences and the perceptions of the faculty who assign the group activities

Kenneth J. Chapman, Matthew L. Meuter, Daniel Toy, Lauren K. Wright (2010). *Are Student Groups Dysfunctional? Perspectives From Both Sides of the Classroom*. *Journal of Marketing Education*, vol. 32 no. 1: 39-49

Bolton (1999), for example, found discrepancy between professor and student satisfaction with team-based class projects with 91% of professors satisfied with the outcomes while only 64% of students shared a favorable viewpoint.

THE REALITY

While most students recognize the importance of teamwork, they still prefer to work alone when the goal is achieving good performance (McCorkle, et al., 1999).

THE REALITY

Despite the documented benefits of participating in group projects, a considerable number of business students tend to express negative opinions about being assigned to participate in group activities.

Frequently expressed complaints regarding group assignments center around the negative interactions that take place between group members:

- personality conflicts
- poor communication
- low levels of individual commitment to the group

JUSTIFICATION FOR THE STUDY

1. Little, if any research in Jamaica/Region

Du Toit (2005) points to the lack of research and the application of research evidence to inform policy in developing countries.

2. Change in corporate approach to employment - from cradle-to-grave employment replaced with contracts

3. Jamaica – Collective Society

1. Jamaica, with a score of 39 in individualism, is considered a collectivistic society so we should expect teamwork to be a driver of culture/ behaviour

1. <http://geert-hofstede.com/jamaica.html>

4. What happens in US also fans out to other places

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This research addresses how student views regarding

- a) skills important for initial post-graduate employment, and
- b) teamwork

compare to those of managers in corporate Jamaica.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What skills do managers perceive as important for initial post-graduate employment of students?
2. What skills do students perceive as important for their initial post-graduate employment?
3. Do perceptual differences of the skills needed for initial post-graduate employment exist between managers and students?
4. What is the perception of managers of the importance of teamwork for initial post-graduate employment of students?
5. What is the perception of students of the importance of teamwork for initial post-graduate employment?
6. Do perceptual differences of the importance of teamwork for initial post-graduate employment exist between managers and students?

RESEARCH METHOD

Survey

Same Questionnaire administered to participants in both samples.

Research participants

This study will include two samples:

1. sample of companies registered with the JEF (interested in employing graduates?)
2. sample of final year students (UWI)

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

1. **Gap in Perception between students and managers for both skills and teamwork**
 - Identification of alignment and gaps in perception of both students and management
2. **Use of gap information to suggest improvements in the preparation of business students for working in teams in organizations.**
 - In higher education, lecturers/professors can influence students by promoting the skills businesses are seeking in future employees and helping students achieve these skills through course activities.
 - Professors can also influence the choices students make through advising relationships.

PROFESSIONAL IMPACT

IMPLICATIONS FOR preparing UWI GRADUATES for the world of work, especially for working in teams.

IMPLICATIONS FOR JAMAICA

- Part of the globalization shift - need for benchmarking to world standards
- Culture – individual vs. collective and what this means for teamwork
 - Implications for preparation of the workforce

IMPLICATION FOR BUSINESS EDUCATION

The ability to work efficiently and effectively in a team is mandatory to a business student's success. However, students might not be aware of or even care about what skills are important during their post-secondary educational experience.

Faculty members need to be aware of the skills that employers value and emphasize these skills with students. Faculty members are in charge of curriculum and the content of their classes, and they may be able to guide students through assignments or experiential learning exercises to value the skills employers value.