



Benefits of Group Learning As a Collaborative Strategy in a Diverse Higher Education Context

J. Van Wyk¹ and F. Haffeejee²

¹Clinical and Professional Practice, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

²Durban University of Technology, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

KEYWORDS Education. Language. Culture. Diversity Teaching. Tertiary

ABSTRACT This paper explored students' perceptions of group work in advancing their communication, participation, understanding and overall learning following a compulsory collaborative exercise. An exploratory, descriptive quantitative study was conducted with second year students on an Epidemiology course. They used a self-administered questionnaire to rate their agreement regarding group work in the multi-racial, tertiary setting. Respondents reported greater control of learning (78%) and increased personal benefit (69%). They found the intervention useful (73%); perceived improved participation and communication (63%) amongst peers and reportedly read wider (56%) for this exercise. Some students (35%) reported ineffective work and some English first language users described the strategy as "a waste of time" ($\rho = 0.307$; $p = 0.027$). Even the limited use of group work strategies can develop a positive learning climate, aid classroom cohesion and improve self-directedness of students during cross-cultural engagement on health science courses.