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A phenomenological study of teamwork in online and face-to-face student teams / Marzieh Saghafian ; D. Kevin O'Neill

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Abstract

Team-based projects are widely used in both traditional face-to-face and online programs in higher education. To date, the teamwork experiences of students in each modality have been documented primarily through evaluative research conducted over short spans of time and limited by a priori frameworks. The literature also reflects a lack of agreement about what constitutes the phenomenon of teamwork in each modality. In order to address these limitations, we conducted a phenomenological study examining the lived experiences of teamwork among students in both face-to-face and online MBA programs in Iran. Our analysis revealed striking commonalities in the experiences of both groups, including a shared desire for effective leadership to alleviate the problem of free riders, as well as substantial time and effort invested in retaining reliable teammates from one team project to another. In other respects, face-to-face and online students' experience differed strongly. For example, while face-to-face participants pursued teammates with similar beliefs about how teamwork should be accomplished, online participants found themselves pre-occupied with

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staying connected with their teammates and struggled to establish common communication channels with each and every team member. Overall, our findings suggest that while training and support for student teamwork can partly build on the shared needs among students in both modalities, the nature of the experience in each modality may be so different in vital respects that engaging in one mode of teamwork does not necessarily prepare students to participate well in the other mode. Other implications and limitations of the research are discussed. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)