

# I AM LOST AND VOICELESS CONTRIBUTOR, THE CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED BY TOURISM STUDENTS OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN COLLABORATIVE PROJECT : CASE STUDY OF STAHN MPU KUTURAN SINGARAJA

Kadek Wiramarta

STAH Negeri Mpu Kuturan Singaraja, [wiramartakadek@gmail.com](mailto:wiramartakadek@gmail.com)

## Abstract

In order to fulfill the industry's expanding demand for collaborative competencies, students in tourism vocational higher education programs must strengthen their social abilities. Teachers are particularly urged to use collaborative instructional strategy into their curriculum. Despite the numerous studies that emphasize the value of collaborative learning, there are only a few that emphasize on the difficulty of collaborative learning, and even fewer that focus on tourism vocational students in higher education especially in STAHN Mpu Kuturan Singaraja. Hence, this study has two objectives: the perceptions of students and the challenges they face during collaborative learning projects. To collect the desired data, a survey and interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) were administered to 16 students who had participated in collaborative learning for 50% of their meetings this semester. This study indicated that there are divergent opinions on the implementation of the collaborative learning process, with some students believing that collaborative learning positively impacts their competency and others believing that it has no effect overall. Additionally, students pointed out their feel lost, voiceless and even struggling with the continuous effort when their peers have weak presence in the collaborative learning. This study is expected to shed lights on students' negative emotional state while experiencing collaborative learning, which eventually help teacher to cope and overcome this issue.

**Keyword:** Collaborative learning, higher education, tourism, vocational education and training,

## Introduction

Indonesian Regulation Act no 20 year 2003 about Indonesian Education System evidently has pushed vocational higher education to prepare students so that they will have more options after completing their studies, whether to work in the chosen industry based on its specifications or to seek a higher degree of study. Therefore, The Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture (2017) expected that students who complete a vocational program will be well-equipped to fulfill the needs of a diverse and skilled labor force.

Only the combination of a person's generic capacity (easily transferrable to a variety of contexts) and vocational capacity (specific, specialized knowledge required for a particular occupation) may enable vocational education students meet these objectives (Rimmington, 1999). Especially with the current circumstances of highly competitive workforce Bourn, McKenzie, and Shiel (2006) assert that modern employers need graduates who are well-rounded and capable of operating in a multicultural, multilingual, and intercultural setting. This means that in

addition to the competency in utilizing the internet and converse in several languages, they will also be able to think critically, deal with uncertainty, and value diversity. In light of this, it is essential that students participate in activities designed to support the growth of these skills.

Among these skills, collaboration is one of the most important personal qualities that students must acquire. Collaboration is a typical practice especially within the tourism industry. Collaboration engages its participants in an adaptable and flexible process, enabling the involvement of several individuals/organizations in resolving a problem or issue (Gray, 1989). Collaborations between tourism enterprises help them to overcome resource shortages and thrive in today's quickly expanding, highly competitive industry characterized by extensive use of digital technology and knowledgeable consumers (Wang & Fesenmaier, 2007; Wang & Xiang, 2007). In addition, the construction of tourist attractions is a collaborative endeavor involving several individuals with diverse ideas, experiences, and social and cultural backgrounds (Bramwell & Lane, 2000). A tourism region may possess numerous distinct entities and accommodation. However, those are typically seen by visitors as a single entity (Agarwall, 1997). Businesses in the tourism business are intricately linked due to the connections created by tourists at multiple locations within the tourism site (Zach et al., 2008). It is general knowledge that touristic attractions contain a range of enterprises and types of accommodation, such as hotels, travel agencies, and other attractions. These divisions do not operate independently; rather, they collaborate to cultivate a favorable public image in prominent tourist sites. With this in mind,

prospective tourism worker needs to grow their capacity to form partnership and work collaboratively with other people. Therefore, tourism vocational education and training are urged to actively involve students in collaborative and cooperative work with their peers in the classroom.

Within the scope of education, collaborative learning has been identified as one of the most effective strategies for fostering student growth (Freeman et al., 2014). Collaborative learning, which has its roots in the social-cognitivism theory, aims to transform students' prior knowledge with the assistance of the society around the learners. The collaborative learning transformation is a direct result of cognitive discord and socio-cognitive conflict that emerge during group tasks. This paradox arises when individuals are required to assess arguments that contradict their own which inevitably leads them to renegotiate their old knowledge and renew it based on the occurring debate (Vygotsky, 1978). Experts has emphasized on two aspects that should emphasized during the process of collaborative learning. Gerlach (1994) placed a strong focus on the social and conversational components of collaborative learning. This is owing to the fact that studying in groups promotes dialogue among students, therefore ensuring that they get something from the experience (Baloche & Brody, 2017). On the other hand, Slavin (1980) proposed that common objectives among students are crucial for collaborative learning. Collaborative learning is an educational strategy in which students work together to achieve shared academic goals (Goodsell, Maher, & Tinto, 1992). When adopting collaborative learning in the classroom, it is crucial to keep these two views in mind as complementing parts that comprise collaborative learning's characteristics. However, while

collaborating in group students also needs to take ownership of their actions and appreciate the strengths and contributions of others around them (Laal & Ghodsi, 2012).

Collaborative classroom activities might aid students' personal and intellectual growth. Gillies (2008) says that academic progress was noticed in schools where teachers had the means to practice collaborative learning. In addition to higher levels of academic achievement, Felder and Brent (2007) add that through the process of collaborative learning students may acquire higher-level reasoning and critical thinking skills, lower levels of anxiety and stress, more time on task and less disruptive behavior in class, , greater intrinsic drive to learn and achieve, greater capacity to perceive situations from diverse perspectives, deeper knowledge of previously learned content, and higher self-efficacy, which ultimately leads to the development of a positive and constructive learning environment. Additionally, collaborative learning is one example of an effective instructional method that, if included into an institution's pedagogical philosophy, has the ability to contribute to a culture of successful instruction and, eventually, greater student retention rates (Loes, et.al., 2017)

Myriad of studies have been conducted to investigate the implementation of collaborative learning in multiple learning environment. Collaborative learning has been proven effective in various context including in blended learning environment (See Al-Samarraie and Saeed, 2018; Marden and Herrington, 2020), higher nursing education (Zhang and Cui, 2018), primary and secondary education (See Van-Leuween and Janssen (2019), or higher education in general (See Williams, 2017). Therefore, some other researchers had

integrated this learning method through multiple media or technologies including self and peer assessment (See Ma, Yan and Wang, 2020), educational computer game (See Sung and Hwang, 2018), digital note taking (See Shi,et.al., 2020), digital storytelling (See Nam, 2017), and virtual learning (See Greenwald, et.al., 2017). This learning approach also have been proven to affect learners positively in developing their capacity of knowledge sharing and organizing (See Sung and Hwang, 2018), critical thinking skill (See Loes and Pascarella, 2017), learning motivation and style (see Peng, Wang and Wu, 2019), Learning Persistense (See Loes, et.al., 2017), and learning achievement and cognitive load (See Shi, et.al., 2020). Despite the vast quantity of research that has been conducted, only a small percentage has focused on vocational education and training. The aforementioned explanation have elaborately explained the partnership requirements of the tourist sector. Therefore, it is necessary to incorporate collaborative learning into the vocational higher education learning process. Moreover, few studies have addressed the challenge confronted by vocational students during the learning process. Therefore, it is vital to have a deeper understanding of the obstacles that vocational education students face when collaborating with their peers in the classroom setting.

In light of the aforementioned issues, the focus of this study will be on the challenges encountered by tourism students of STAHN Mpu Kuturan Singaraja while employing a variety of group-based learning methodologies. This is not intended to dissuade teachers from implementing collaborative learning in their classrooms, but rather to provide an alternative perspective on the issues that some students have encountered while

employing this strategy. With this knowledge, it is intended that educators would be better able to anticipate a variety of challenges that may develop during collaborative learning and take necessary steps to mitigate any potential repercussions. This helps educators obtain the skills necessary to assist student of tourism vocational higher education learning process in group settings.

### **Research Methods**

#### **Research Approach**

This investigation utilizes both positivist and interpretivist epistemological viewpoints. It is indisputable that the approaches are in opposition. Positivists allow social scientists to portray their fields with the same thoroughness and rigor as scientific specialists, giving them with a solid foundation for making bold claims about the veracity, objectivity, and practicality of their findings (Benton and Craib, 2001). On the other hand, Interpretivists believe that individuals acquire knowledge through their own unique perspectives and interpretations of the world, making entirely objective study impossible (Hiller, 2016). Despite their differences, we feel that the two techniques would complement one another in order to produce a more thorough result and to describe the phenomenon as exhaustively as possible.

Utilizing both survey and interpretive phenomenological analysis, this study achieved its research objectives. Some participants were handed a questionnaire to acquire an objective perspective on the phenomena. To generate more comprehensible and meaningful patterns in the data interpretive phenomenological analysis was utilized. Interpretive phenomenological analysis

(IPA) dive extensively into how participants appraised their own personal experiences (Smith 2004). Researchers that used IPA are interested not just in the content of participants' experiences, but also in the importance they place on those experiences (Chapman & Smith, 2002). Furthermore, IPA is distinguished by a 'double hermeneutic' approach in which participants make meaning of their experiences and the researcher attempts to decode that meaning in order to make sense of the participants' meaning making (Pietkiewicz and Smith, 2014; Smith and Osborn, 2008), allowing the researcher to gain a thorough understanding of the research's objectives. This research approach seemed to be suitable for our research since we aimed to draw meaning from students' experiences while they were engaged in collaborative learning with their peers.

#### **Research Participants**

Twenty students in the researcher's class of tourism vocational higher education participated in this study. Taking on the role of an insider was unquestionably advantageous for approaching the participants more intimately. Although it would have been possible to conduct interviews without prior expertise, it is certainly not with the same breadth and personal depth. To assure the classroom's suitability for this study, 50% of the classroom's sessions involved collaborative learning, ranging from peer to group work (8 from 16 meetings). In the end, only 16 of the 20 students in the classroom completed the questionnaire; hence, this study will solely focus on these 16 students.

#### **Data Collection and Analysis**

To acquire a greater understanding of students' emotional states during

collaborative learning, anonymous questionnaires were used to collect data. Students were not requested to provide their personal information. As a result, every participant guaranteed anonymity, allowing them to speak more freely during surveys. As both a teacher and a researcher who observed this class, researcher attempted to remain impartial by neither commenting on the positive and negative aspects of collaborative work nor directing students to say something to this study. In addition, instead of direct interviews, surveys were done since it might be daunting for students, given the present connection between the researcher and participants. Therefore, students were only requested to explain as thoroughly as possible what they were experiencing in the classroom during collaborative work through the questionnaires given to students.

Students were questioned in their native language of Bahasa Indonesia, which allowed them to more freely discuss their experiences with collaborative education. The data were then translated into English. After collecting all of the data needed, it is thoroughly analyzed. Finally,

these data are organized into a variety of distinct themes that may characterize the mental state of students while engaging in collaborative learning.

### Findings

This investigation focuses on two aspects: students' overall attitudes toward collaborative learning and the criticisms they raise throughout the process. In this section, data will be presented in the form of survey findings and an explanation of how this phenomenon occur based on the notes of the participants. In addition, this study measures five simple aspects of students' attitudes about the collaborative learning process: (1) learning quantity, (2) learning quality, (3) preferences, (4) engagement, and (5) motivation. Each piece of data will be presented in the

The first data focuses on the amount of knowledge that students gained through collaborative learning. Specifically, this questionnaire addressed if students can comprehend more content when they learn collectively as opposed to individual learning. The outcome may be seen in the table 1.

**Table 1. Result of Questionnaires**

No	Item	Really Agree (4)	Agree (3)	Disagree (2)	Really Disagree (1)	Average
1	I believe that I learn more by using collaborative learning	0.00%	50.00%	43.75%	6.25%	2.38
2	I believe I understand the material deeper by using collaborative learning	6.25%	56.25%	31.25%	6.25%	2.63
3	Collaboratively assigned tasks are preferable than individually delivered ones.	6.25%	50.00%	37.50%	6.25%	2.56
4	I feel more engaged to tasks that are given collaboratively compared to tasks that are assigned individually	18.75%	37.50%	43.75%	0.00%	2.75

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5	I feel more motivated about the tasks that are given collaboratively compared to tasks that are assigned individually	6.25%	50.00%	43.75%	0.00%	2.63
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Several inferences may be made from the data above. First, students have contradictory opinions regarding the implementation of collaborative learning in terms of learning quantity, learning quality, preferences, engagement, and motivation. There is a heated discussion among students as to whether collaborative learning is a positive experience that aids in the development of their competency as future tourism employees who are capable of collaborating. The average score for the five aforementioned factors is between 2.38 and 2.75 (on a scale of 4). This score is neither high enough to be regarded a successful implementation nor so low that it is typically associated with pedagogical failure. In other words, the adoption of this collaborative learning creates students who either will ultimately be able to profit from it or are hesitant to embrace it for their professional development.

There are several reasons that may become the problems that should be anticipated by an educator while implementing collaborative work towards students. In general, based on students not there are three themes emerged that can picturize students' negative state of emotion while experiencing collaborative learning.

### **I'm Lost and Disoriented**

During collaborative learning, several students voiced their doubts and confusion. One student disclosed that interpretations of collaborative learning systems frequently fell short of his expectations. He elaborates that procedure of teamwork is usually carried out by

assigning each student a portion of the tasks. However, this collaborative technique is highly individualistic since it requires each student to focus solely on his assigned work and neglect other aspects of the assignment. As a result, the collaborative approach he participated in led to suboptimal learning. The excerpt below outlines the situations these students experienced.

... However, I'm still uncertain about how to maximize the benefits of collaborating with my peers. In most cases, we simply divide up the responsibilities, with each person completing their own portion. Consequently, I just learn a little piece of the puzzle. I do not feel like exerting sufficient effort in my studies." [Excerpt 1, translated by author]

Similarly, one student describes his interactions with group members who shared diverse perspectives. Occasionally, his grasp of a subject differs significantly from that of his group members. Due to this dispute, students are forced to choose between trusting their intuition or the mainstream opinion. He believes that direction from teachers, which should be an integral part of the educational process, is restricted in collaborative learning. During collaborative learning, their peers can instead function as guides and mentors for one another. Consequently, when students are introduced to new information, there is a sense of rejection which make their confusion is likely to

increase. The excerpt below describes the conditions experienced by this student.

"I simply cannot concentrate on the material being provided. I find the teacher's explanation to be too dissimilar to how my peers are describing the learning content. Sometimes I find it easier to acquire knowledge from a single reliable source, like my teacher. My doubt originates from my concern that I may get incorrect information from my peers." [Excerpt 2, translated by author]

Despite the fact that students frequently encounter confusion, this has to be handled head-on so that rather than negative effect on their learning, it affects students positively. Researchers have shown that individuals who report the feeling of confusion and disorientation also indicate greater cognitive engagement with the whole learning experience (Arguel, et.al, 2016). However, if this misunderstanding is addressed properly, Lehman, D'Mello, and Graesser (2012) assert that it can actually help students to achieve a deeper knowledge of the content. In contrast, if students are unable to resolve their confusion, they may lose interest in the topic and material at hand. It may cause students to overlook the presence of new, problematic information (Chinn and Brewer, 1993), which potentially can disrupt students' individual learning process.

### **Struggle as Voiceless Contributor**

Lack of opportunity for students to demonstrate their existence emerges as another issue that develops with the use of collaborative learning. Students have a propensity to demonstrate their ability in

certain aspect of learning. However, due to the number of members in the group, students feel they have limited opportunities to prove their capacity in collaborative learning. Consequently, students feel like voiceless group members, despite their strong desire to prove their existence. The two excerpts below reveal that students have a low likelihood of doing so.

"I feel invisible due to the large number of students in my assignment group." (Excerpts 3, translated by author)

"During collaborative learning, it seems that I am not being given the opportunity to develop. Only certain individuals are singled out to be given attention. Therefore, the assessment could be really unfair and inaccurate." (Excerpts 4, translated by author)

In addition to the restricted opportunities to demonstrate their abilities, some students feel stifled and silenced during collaborative learning. When one student attempts to voice their perspective, there is a high chance that another student will disregard this opinion. In the end, some participants choose to remain mute during collaborative learning because they believe that anything they say will be deemed inadequate by the group.

I am not happy since the majority of the thoughts I express are rejected by others. I believe I have articulated my viewpoint and opinion fairly well. However, they rarely notice the positive aspects of my argument. It's as though they have labeled my

opinion as negative and bad  
(Excerpts 5, translated by author)

Due to the probability of disengagement and quiet students as a result of collaborative learning (Richmond, Wrench, and McCroskey, 2013), teachers must pay close attention to the collaborative learning process in order to reduce the likelihood of students becoming quiet in the classroom. The instructor must also begin to facilitate group differences so that prospective group conflicts can be incorporated into knowledge rebuilding. Overall, the collaborative learning process necessitates instructors that can inspire students to remain engaged and vocal in the classroom.

#### **I'm Losing Friend in this One-Man Group.**

Throughout the collaborative learning process, concerns with regulating their peers occur as a last obstacle. All members of the group are the same age, ostensibly enabling beneficial conversations and interactions among members. However, this also renders them susceptible to peer pressure and unable of managing their group successfully. In addition, each member of the group is unique and has their own motivations, perspectives, and ideas. Therefore, merging these principles is a challenging endeavor.

"It is difficult to bring a group of friends together to achieve anything together. They have way too diverse personalities and opinions." (Excerpts 6, translated by author)

In addition to the difficulty of unifying their ideas, some students must also deal with the absence of group

members at important periods in the project's completion. There are students who just join a group because it is a course requirement, not because they wish to exchange ideas expand their own horizons via discussion. That means that other students will have to take on greater responsibilities.

"I find it frustrating to have to collaborate with people who can't be relied on. I really don't have someone to talk to about anything. It appears their only motivation is to have their names associated with the team without actually doing anything." (Excerpts 7, translated by author)

Another issue that drew attention was a student's remark that they had arguments with even their closest friends. Students are frequently embroiled in a dispute as a result of the aforementioned difficulties challenges. The incident in question is described in the excerpt below.

"I find that even amongst my closest friends, disagreements frequently arise. Even people whom I like very much personally can become really annoying in the group work." (Excerpts 8, translated by author)

Examining these challenges encourages educators to explore the social presence of students during collaborative learning in greater depth. In collaborative learning environments, social presence is essential for the creation of a robust community of inquiry (So & Brush, 2008). In addition, it develops a feeling of community that motivates students to collaborate in pursuit of their particular



educational goals (Smith & Flaherty, 2013). Overall, pupils' academic performance has increased as a result of social presence (Lee, 2014). Ultimately, teachers must be able to maintain students' social presence in order to develop their cognitive and emotional engagement during collaborative learning.

### Conclusion and Implication

The focus of the current study is on two domains. First, this study intends to determine how students in tourism vocational higher education perceive collaborative learning. Second, this study seeks to investigate the challenges they face throughout the collaborative learning process. This research revealed that students had differing perspectives on whether collaborative learning had a beneficial or negative effect on their learning process. The majority of students see collaborative learning as a meaningful educational approach to be incorporated into the learning process. Despite this, a significant number of students have difficulties while engaging in collaborative learning. In addition, after conducting an in-depth investigation, it was determined that the implementation of collaborative learning was suboptimal due to the existence of three major issues. Students believe that collaborative learning might cause them to get disoriented and lost throughout the learning process. Moreover, students state

that they have limited opportunities to discover and demonstrate their potential.

In the meantime, some students believe that collaborative learning makes them feel as though they must work more on their own, especially when they have fewer cooperative peers. Overall, students have encountered certain difficulties when engaging in collaborative classroom learning.

Collaborative learning has a favorable influence in general, but its application cannot be applied to all pupils. Previous research had demonstrated that both teachers and students alike may find the process of collaborating on a project to be challenging due to the complexity and difficulty of the task (Gillies, 2016; Zygoris-Coe, 2012). Therefore, before implementing collaborative learning, it is important to evaluate the distinct qualities and traits that each student exhibits throughout the learning

process. Educators must determine if collaborative learning is acceptable for implementation and if their students are prepared to engage in it. Educators must also guarantee that every student participates so that there is no learning process in which one student absolutely dominates while the others remain exceedingly quiet and mute. By this way, an inclusive and equitable learning process may be accomplished.

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