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STUDENTS' EXPERIENCE TOE (TEAM ORAL EXAMINATION) DIPPING IN A LEADERSHIP CAPSTONE CLASS

BY

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THESIS

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative research study presents the benefits and drawbacks of administering a team oral examination in a leadership capstone class. Previous studies related to team oral examinations have focused on team exams, oral exams, exams in leadership education, and team oral exams outside of leadership. This study took place in the capstone course of a leadership certificate program at a public, land grant institution in the Midwestern United States. Participants were enrolled in a capstone leadership course and the data collected came from participants who took the team oral examination and wrote a reflection in response to the process of the team oral examination. Through multiples rounds of document analysis, 11 major themes were identified which included: emotional distress before the examination, the effectiveness of the examination, collaboration, team development, using the exam as an evaluation tool, a way to establish goals and outcomes, group contributions, groups flow, professional development, real-world experience, and the structure of the exam. I concluded the team oral examination was a great way for students to reflect on their groups' process. Additionally, team oral examinations could be improved by more clear and detailed instructions. At the end of this thesis, I have included recommendations for the future practice and research.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This qualitative study addresses the benefits and challenges associated with administering a team oral examination in a leadership capstone course. Very little literature exists regarding team oral examinations in leadership education, therefore; my study drew upon research on team examinations, team oral examinations, team-based learning, and leadership education discreetly. This study bridges a gap between these concepts to understand the real benefits and drawbacks of team oral examinations in a leadership capstone course. This study was focused on answering the following questions: What are the benefits of administering team oral examinations in a leadership capstone class? What are the challenges facing the administration of team oral examinations in a leadership capstone class? What are the perceptions of team oral examinations in a leadership capstone class?

Despite deep searches for literature on team oral examinations in leadership education, very few if any results could be identified. Subsequently, I reviewed the literature on several subjects surrounding the topic of team oral examinations, including: team oral examinations, team-based learning, team examinations, and leadership education. It was found that employers want their employees to work effectively in teams and be able to verbally communicate with peers (Seemiller & Murray, 2013). The research-based on leadership education found effective pedagogies in this field involve discussion-based learning in the curriculum. Team-based learning is a new approach that is found to improve student's work (Koles, et al., 2010). Team-based learning leads to students taking examinations in a team setting which promoted a sense of community, higher scores, and reduced test anxiety and fear (Hurren, et al., 2006). Team oral examinations were found to provide students with more motivation to learn and prepare, build

future career skills, and they preferred the team oral examination to the traditional pencil and paper examinations.

This study took place on the campus of the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign. The University of Illinois houses numerous colleges; one of which is the College of Agricultural, Consumer, and Environmental Sciences (ACES), where the Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communications (ALEC) program is housed. This ALEC program is where the university-wide minor, where students from all over campus can take a series of leadership courses and finish with the LEAD 480 capstone class, is found. That capstone course, Collaborative Leadership, is where the participants were selected for this qualitative study.

Participants in this study were selected from the enrollment in the LEAD 480 course. There were 34 students enrolled in the LEAD 480 course for the fall semester when this study took place. Written consent was received from all participants. Participants were required per the syllabus to take part in a team oral examination and reflect upon the experience in a reflection post due a week after the examination took place.

Qualitative data, in the form of personal reflection papers, was collected from 17 participants in LEAD 480. After the data was collected, document analysis of participant's reflections on their experience with the team oral examination was conducted. Choosing document analysis of an in-class assignment as the primary analytic technique meant no further action beyond normal enrollment activities were needed from participants to be included in the study.

Through analysis 11 themes became apparent. These themes included the effectiveness of the team oral examination, group processes, emotions about the team oral examination, collaboration, the team oral examination being used as an evaluation tool, verbal communication,

goals and outcomes, group flow, professional development, real-life experience, and the structure of the examination. Participants noted that they felt the team oral examination was effective as both progress and reflective tool. The team oral examination was also found to be a chance for the students to collaborate with one another and build a sense of community. Many students stated that the team oral examination produced negative emotions for them. By taking the team oral examination, students were able to look at their team's process and reflect on their time together. This resulted in students assessing their group member's contributions to the assessment and question if this examination was fair for the more outgoing students. However, the team oral examination improved students' ability to communicate their goals and objectives regarding course timelines. Students felt that the team oral examination allowed them to apply course concepts, develop professional skills, and gained real-world experience.

I concluded the team oral examination may not promote course content mastery, however; it did excel as a process mastery tool. This examination also favored more outspoken students over quieter ones, especially when the team examination was viewed as a "black cloud" in the course syllabus. Students had very negative connotations associated with the team oral examination, which could be remedied through accurately describing in detail what to expect from the team oral examination. This could also be conquered by allowing students to participate in a mock team oral examinations or have them submit questions to the instructor that they want to be asked during the assessment. As an under-studied pedagogy, wider research could be conducted on more specific themes associated with the team oral examination to expand our knowledge for this pedagogy. By reading this paper, I hope you will determine if the team oral examination belongs in your curriculum based on the benefits and drawbacks that are outlined in the following pages.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Students in the Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communication (ALEC) program at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign are sought by employers as potential industry leaders. As the people responsible for teaching these students that we are preparing them for those roles, leadership educators approach their craft in the most effective, efficient and innovative ways possible. It is our duty to ensure students are equipped to handle various responsibilities in their chosen careers. To teach this, we need to evolve our traditional instruction and make their education more engaging and practical. One way of achieving this goal is by incorporating concepts from classes similar to LEAD 480, where students gain a sense of community with their peers by working in teams throughout the semester on various projects. One particular project that promotes students engaging in the material and practicing for their impending futures is the team oral examination. This study will closely look into the benefits and drawbacks of having team oral examinations in a leadership course to inform recommendations regarding its most impactful implementation.

Students spend considerable time, energy, and financial resources on their college education, often with the intent of securing their dream jobs. University of Illinois students are no exception and are known for their excellence in their academic journey and professional career. What employers want to see in their employees is not a topic students tend to focus on while trying to pass highly technical courses in order to graduate. However, students should know what their future employers want to see. Seemiller and Murray (2013) reported employers want graduates who work effectively in team structures, clearly communicate verbally with people in and outside the organization, make conscious decisions, actively solve problems, organize and plan their work, and obtain and process information. Yet, the most prominent

competency employers wanted was the ability to orally communicate (Seemiller & Murray, 2013). Effective oral communication can be developed through leadership education. Leadership education is a fairly new, but rapidly growing, subject in the immense world of education. It focuses on developing people through their skill sets, training, and leadership frameworks. Due to this relative newness, there is very little research on the best practices on how to teach leadership to students and develop them into leaders. This study intends on filling that gap.

Existing research indicated the signature pedagogies in leadership education are those involving discussion. Jenkins (2012) found classroom discussion, small group discussion, and other discussion-based approaches were the most frequently used pedagogy in leadership education. Discussion-based learning is an avenue for the development of oral communication, but also involves a team of people to be able to hold an engaging discussion. Being able to communicate with a group of people is a unique skill that can be learned through team-based learning.

Team-based learning is also a relatively new pedagogy that is becoming more popular in the medical community. The research on team-based learning is mostly centered on describing the concept but does provide some expected benefits (Michaelsen & Sweet, 2008, 2011). The expected benefits for students who are taught with this design have increased progression through the material, a deeper understanding of the material, and gained insights on themselves as team players (Michaelsen & Sweet, 2008). Teachers who implement this practice redesign entire courses but see benefits through socializing more with their students and improved learning experiences (Michaelsen & Sweet, 2008). Those who have practiced team-based learning found improved performance among students (Koles, et al., 2010). This pedagogy prepares students by verbalizing and negotiating the material with peers (Koles, et al., 2010).

Cheng et al. (2014) cited students found the material more engaging and enjoyable to learn through team-based learning. Those students also attained higher academic achievement through their increased interest (Cheng et al., 2014). However, team-based learning has very little foundational research and needs more outcome centered research that can serve as testimony on why teachers need to redesign their courses to be team-based learning (Koles, et al., 2010). An essential element of team-based learning is team examinations (Michaelsen & Sweet, 2011).

Traditional methods of testing, include written examinations, usually involve anxiety, cramming, and a lot of memorization. Team examinations are an innovative approach that produces more than higher test scores. Hurren et al. (2006) asserted the added value of team examinations include an enhanced sense of community among students, higher motivation to learn, improved learning continuity, better knowledge retention, direct applicability to real-life situations, deeper engagement in the course material, as well as reduced test anxiety/fear. However, students are not the only ones who receive benefits from team examinations. Instructors receive valid feedback (Stark, 2006), are able to give immediate feedback to the students, and less grading (Heminway, 2015). Taken together, team examinations are effective, efficient, and innovative approaches to measuring student learning and development while mitigating some of the negative consequences of traditional paper-and-pencil testing.

With all the benefits associated with team examinations, it is no question that team oral examinations can be beneficial. Davids (2012) found students who participated in the team oral examinations had higher test scores. Students also preferred the team oral examination to a written assessment. Written examinations do not accurately assess students' knowledge (Heminway, 2015). Students felt it prepared them for the real-world compared to written examinations (Davids, 2012). Students noted that they were more motivated to prepare and learn

for the team oral examination (Davids, 2012). Other students claimed they were stressed and scared but that it was worth it due to getting more out of the team oral examinations (Heminway, 2015). They also remarked how the process of taking the team oral examination led to a deeper understanding and retention of the material (Davids, 2012). Despite students benefiting from the team oral examinations, there are some drawbacks to administering this type of assessment. More time is required by professors in designing, administering, and grading team oral exams as compared to more traditional student learning measurements. Additionally, team oral examinations cannot be taken in as large a group setting as written examinations, therefore; it is more work on the administrator to schedule team oral examinations (Heminway, 2015). Another drawback noted by both Davids (2012) and Heminway (2015) is that there is unfairness in grading team oral examinations if all team members did not give an equal contribution to the examination. Individual instructors weigh these factors carefully when considering if and how to incorporate team oral examinations into their curricula.

Although team oral examinations have demonstrated some impactful benefits and potential drawbacks, too little research exists regarding team examinations in a leadership course. There is a need for more outcome- and process-centered research to demonstrate the value of administering team examinations in a leadership capstone course. This qualitative research study attempts to fill this gap in the literature and provide the benefits and drawbacks of team oral examinations in a leadership minor capstone course.

CHAPTER 3: METHODS

This qualitative study was conducted at a large, research-extensive, land grant university in the Midwestern United States. The data used in this study were reflection papers written by participants on their experiences during the team oral examination. This data was subject to document analyses resulting in 11 thematic themes. Some limiting factors also impacted this study and are briefly reviewed in this section.

SETTING AND PARTICIPANTS

This study took place at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign is a world-renowned research intensive land grant university that houses over 44,000 students from diverse backgrounds from all around the world. The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign comprises fifteen colleges and programs. One of these colleges is the College of Agricultural, Consumer, and Environmental Sciences (ACES).

The College of ACES is ranked as one of the top 30 agricultural schools in the world (College of Agricultural, Consumer, and Environmental Sciences, 2020). The College of ACES has over 3,000 students from diverse backgrounds that also come from around the world to study engineering, economics, communications, and much more. The main focus of the College of ACES is for students to study and work towards improving the world. Within the College of ACES, there are ten major programs of study. One of these programs is Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communications (ALEC).

The ALEC program has three concentrations of agricultural communications, agricultural education, and organizational and community leadership. Agricultural Communications "…prepares students to communicate issues in food, agriculture, and the environment across various platforms" (Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communications, 2019). The

agricultural education concentration prepares students to become high school agriculture teachers and FFA advisors. The Organizational and Community concentration "…prepares students for leadership, training, and organizational positions in agricultural, community, and governmental agencies" (Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communications, 2019). The ALEC major also houses the campus-wide Leadership Minor; where students take 17-18 credits which concludes with a capstone class to gain knowledge on what it means to be a leader and becoming an effective leader in their community and organization. The capstone class where students practice those ideas is LEAD 480: Collaborative Leadership.

LEAD 480: Collaborative Leadership is a 16-week fall or spring semester course with an average of 35 students per semester. Students are able to volunteer to pitch ideas to create social change in the community. After a few students pitch their ideas, the entire class will form teams based on what social change they want to be a part of. Teams usually end up with 5-6 members. Over the duration of the course, teams will enlist the help of at least three community partners to design a toolkit that will illustrate the social change that the team chose. Teams also take part in a team oral examination near the end of the semester that assesses their knowledge over concepts learned in the lecture. This team oral examination process is the basis of the study.

The participants in this study were students enrolled in the leadership capstone class LEAD 480: Collaborative Leadership. There were 34 total students enrolled in LEAD 480 and gave their written consent to participate in this study. Participants' age, ethnicity, and gender were not used for selection criteria in this study. The team oral examination and the written reflection were a part of the course syllabus.

DATA COLLECTION

The team oral examination took place on November 14, 2019. The participants were then assigned to complete a reflection post. The prompt which can be found in Appendix D for this reflection post was for the participants to reflect on the team oral examination process. Participants had five days between the team oral examination and the assignment due date to reflect on the process. The reflection post was due on November 19, 2019. After the reflection posts were turned in, a member of the research team took the posts only from the participants that both gave their consent and turned in the assignment and removed their names from the documents. The final analytic dataset consisted of 17 documents.

DATA ANALYSIS

In this qualitative study, data was processed through document analysis. Document analysis is a form of qualitative research where researchers are taking documents that are then interpreted by the researcher to give voice and meaning around a chosen topic (Bowen, 2009). In this study, the documents researched were reflection posts written by the participants based on their experience of taking part in the team oral examinations in Collaborative Leadership.

Document analysis was the chosen form of data analysis because it most readily addressed the research questions: What are the benefits of administering team oral examinations in a leadership capstone class? What are the challenges facing the administration of team oral examinations in a leadership capstone class? What are the perceptions of team oral examinations in a leadership capstone class?

Additionally, there was no extra burden put on the participants; unlike interviews or other forms of data collection would have added more outside labor for students. This reflection post was a preexisting assignment that the students agreed upon by staying enrolled in the course

and the continuation of turning in assignments over the course of the 12-week class. This form of data collection also saves time by already being in written form and no extra work on the researcher to transcribe any of the data.

Reflection papers were provided by the course instructor after names had been removed. I began analysis by reading through all of the documents and coding the data by labeling them 1 through 17 by participant. Once the data was labeled and read through once, themes were extracted. After recording the themes and reading through the data again, the major themes were prioritized by frequency. Throughout the data analysis, it became clear that most students felt anxious and nervous before taking the team oral examination. Most participants reflected on their team's process through the examination. They also commented on the secure feeling of knowing their entire team was in the examination together and could count on each other to answer the questions presented to them. Continuing on this theme, participants began to feel more comfortable and confident during the duration of the examination. In the course of data analysis, it became clear that the team oral examination was a reflection of how each team performed throughout the semester. It was also found that the team oral examination was also check-in to see the progress of each team's work to create the toolkit.

After recording the themes and the frequency of them, the data was read through once more to pull out notable quotes. These quotes were used to use as evidence to support the themes that were observed. The following themes came from this analytic: emotional distress before the examination, the effectiveness of the examination, collaboration, team development, using the exam as an evaluation tool, a way to establish goals and outcomes, group contributions, groups flow, professional development, real-world experience, and the structure of the exam.

LIMITATIONS

As with most research studies there were limitations to this qualitative study. First, this study was not a quantitative study and the nature of the research questions was not quantitative. Quantitative research is beneficial due to it answering the question directly through statistical and numerical data whereas qualitative data is more interpretative in the sense that qualitative research is researchers making meaning of non-numerical data to gain insights. For this reason, qualitative research is perceived as less generalizable.

Another limitation to this study is the time of year it took place. LEAD 480 has one section available in the fall semester when this study took place compared to the spring semester when there are three sections available to students. If this study had taken place in the spring semester with all three sections, the sample size would have tripled leading to more data and input on the team oral examinations.

On the day of receiving informed consent, it snowed which prohibited some students from attending the class. Adverse weather conditions might have impacted students' willingness to participate in the study. Along with adverse weather conditions, some students failed to complete the assignment therefore I did not have all the documents I planned on having. If I had the sample size I was planning on having it could have led to more robust findings. These students could have not completed the assignment due to negative connotations regarding the team oral examination.

My methodology was carried out according to recommendations set forth by Cropley (2019). Despite these limitations, I have confidence in my results due to participants partaking in the team oral examination and reflecting on their real experience. I also have an advanced education in the leadership education field and believe that also provides confidence in my

results. Although I could not do this study differently, I have provided suggestions in the discussion section on how you could do this study differently.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Through document analysis of the reflections written in response to the team oral examination process, 11 major themes became apparent. These themes included: emotional distress before the examination, the effectiveness of the examination, collaboration, team development, using the exam as an evaluation tool, a way to establish goals and outcomes, group contributions, groups flow, professional development, real-world experience, and the structure of the exam. Each of these themes contained similar, but not identical, student opinions on various aspects of the team oral exam.

Participants alluded to the team oral examination as effective, but were vague in describing how it was effective. Sixteen of the 17 participants (94%) noted the team oral examination was effective in some way. There seemed to be two ways the team oral examination demonstrated effectiveness: as a progress tool and reflective tool. Student 3 claimed, “I thought that the team exam process was beneficial for us to reflect on what we have done so far and the direction we want to head in moving forward.” While another benefit seemed to be “...updating [the professor] as well as ask any clarifying questions about the group project.” Students seem to gain different things based on how they engaged the team oral exam and what they might have expected from the experience.

The team oral examination promoted collaboration within each team. Participants noted they were supported by one another during the process of the exam which brought comfort. The data also revealed team members had to collaborate to prepare for the examination. Student 5 stated, “Our team previously had to overcome barriers of miscommunication and having different ideas of what we were doing, so preparing for the team exam and the stage 4 action

plan helped us to get on the same page with the direction we are going as a team." The team oral exams seemed to build a sense of community through the collaborative nature of the assignment.

The team oral examination produced an emotional response from 11 of the 17 (65%) participants. I categorized these emotions as stressed, anxious, and concerned. Most participants noted that fear of the unknown was a big factor in their emotions. There was a concern for team contribution among some, while others worried that their individual contribution would not fulfill requirements. There was a belief in place that this team oral examination was going to be an interrogation of course materials and the instructor would be rigid in their questioning. To the surprise and relief of most participants, the examination was anything but an interrogation and rigid. One of the most challenging aspects of the team oral exam may be the emotional work students put on themselves prior to the interaction.

With the team oral examination being a progress tool, participants reported that they were able to assess their group process. Their group process mirrored the concepts presented in Tuckman and Jensen's Five Stages of Group Development (1977). Student 1 declared, "I think I can safely say that our group has reached a good and steady [*sic*] in our productivity where we are no longer storming or forming but we are really deep into the norming phase which is really good for our future projects and assignments." Statements like this provide evidence the team oral examination allowed students to diagnose their teams' ability to function collaboratively as well as begin to see how future teamwork might take shape.

The team oral examination was also found to be an evaluation tool and a way of assessing group members' performance. Student 3 stated that the "team exam was an excellent way to evaluate what we have accomplished, what steps we could take to improve our project, and the direction we are headed in until the end of the semester." Participants also noted the team oral

examination gave students the opportunity to formulate goals and objectives. These goals and objectives outlined their plan to finish the rest of the semester for the course. This form of examination also helped students practice how to articulate the goal-setting process.

Students also found that the team oral examination "may not be the best way to measure performance." Participants who felt this way questioned whether the team oral examination allowed for equitable collaboration among group members. Echoing that sentiment, student 17 reflected that the "team oral exam is the fact that 3 of us talked and the other 2 were a bit quieter." The team oral examination seems to be good for monitoring overall project progress within teams but may not allow for equal contribution in the examination itself.

Participants reported that they had a sense of group flow throughout their time together working in a team. Student 12 stated, "Despite the setbacks we experienced in our group, I feel as though we bonded very well throughout the semester, we gained what Sawyer says is an important aspect of group flow, which is familiarity." Participants also noted that the team oral examination was a type of professional development. Also, noting that the team oral examination was contributing to real-life experience. A few students mentioned that they liked the structure and nature of the team oral examination.

These 11 themes were the most prevalent in sifting through the data. However, there is a lot more that you did not see, but it aligns with the ideas I have described. In the next section, I share my conclusions supported by this data.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS

Existing literature in leadership education contains little information on the benefits and challenges associated with team oral examinations. Even the evidence that does exist does not speak to the value in a leadership education course. This qualitative research study helps fill this gap in the literature to bring forth the true benefits, challenges, and perceptions of a team oral examination in a leadership capstone course.

According to the data from the present study, team oral examination may not the best measure of course content mastery. Some students described leadership ideas in very clear and specific terms, however; this was not the case for most others. Other students alluded to content in very detailed terms; terms not at the level we might expect in a leadership capstone course. Typically, we expect a mastery of certain languages, applications, and frameworks. Furthermore, team oral examinations were not a great assessment of performance due to unequal contribution during the examination. The team oral examination is meant to measure gains in leadership learning, with implications for future progress. Traditional pencil-and-paper examinations usually intend to measure learning up to a fixed point in time. The team oral examination also measures learning but additionally allows continued learning.

While the team oral examination may not be a great content mastery tool, participants' data suggests the team oral examinations function better as a mastery-of-process tool. Participants reflected on their progress throughout the course and their group process. The participants were found to be working through more of a process point of view from Tuckman and Jensen's (1977) Five Stages of Group Development than a content point of view.

The more outgoing students seemed to do better and have a heavier contribution to the team oral examination. More outspoken students explicitly wondered if their quieter peers had

anything to add or say differently during the examination process. Some participants expressed self-censoring to create opportunities for others to contribute to the conversation. On the other hand, quieter students noted feeling their team oral exam contributions were not as forthcoming as those of their more outspoken peers. However, in most cases, it seemed the more reserved classmates agreed with their more vocal peers.

The team oral examination was thought to be the "Big Bad Wolf", but participants noted feeling relief after the examination concluded. This may be a result of other negative testing and team project experiences students have had in the past. The very title of the assessment may be triggering for many in the class. This means the team oral examination needs to have clearer expectations and descriptions lined out in the very beginning so students are not stressed. Additionally, the positive sentiment students express at the end of the exam may build confidence in their abilities to perform instead of reinforcing preexisting fears.

Research surrounding the benefits and challenges facing the administration of team oral examinations in a leadership capstone class is insufficient. Due to limited research, this study was conducted to gain more insights into the benefits and drawbacks of administering team oral examinations in a leadership capstone class. Despite the study's limitations, the findings and conclusions should be trustworthy because of their alignment with one another. These conclusions lead to recommendations regarding the effective use of the team oral examinations in leadership education, which I will detail in the next section.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION

The team oral examination experiences analyzed demonstrated some clear benefits and challenges for leadership education. Team oral examinations were found to work well as a diagnostic tool for students and educators related to process-based outcomes. However, they may not be as efficient as traditional methods of assessing content learning related to leadership. Team oral examinations may arbitrarily advantage outgoing students while unnecessarily disadvantage more reserved students. As a result of conducting this investigation, I present the following recommendations for practice and future research.

PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

To alleviate some of the emotional responses that students were found to have before the team oral examination, there could be clearer expectations/instructions in the syllabus. This could be a written out explanation of what the team oral examination is and some example questions that could be asked during the duration of the examination. By laying out what to expect from this assessment students can fully prepare and hopefully, the educator will ease their negative emotions surrounding the team oral examination.

In addition to beginning the course with clearer expectations/instructions for the team oral examination, it is important to consider revisiting this expectation conversation multiple times throughout the semester. By returning to this conversation regularly throughout the semester students will be more prepared and motivated to take on the team oral examination. Keeping the team oral examination as a consistent topic throughout the semester will help students retain familiarity with expectations and be thinking about what steps they need to take to effectively prepare for this examination.

For maximum preparedness and to ease students' emotions, the instructor could allow students to create a mock team oral examination for one another. The instructor could set some guidelines and give some example questions for each team to quiz one another to prepare for the team oral examination. This would allow students to practice their strategies and work on their communication as a team. The instructor could also give students a list of prospective exam questions so students know what they are expected to know and how to prepare. By doing this, the students would be more confident, more at ease, and practice mastering the language needed to successfully take on the team oral examination.

This investigation was dependent upon students reflecting on their experience in the team oral examination in a discussion post. Students seemed to gravitate towards reflecting on their group process as was evidenced by the findings. To uncover students' experiences with the team oral examination, I recommend having a clearer and more detailed prompt for students in their post-team oral examination reflection assignment. You can ask questions such as, 'How did you feel during the team oral examination?', 'How did you feel about the contributions from your team members?', 'How did the team oral examination contribute to your learning?'. By asking students to reflect on their experience with these questions you will receive the feedback to know how and if the team oral examination belongs in your curriculum.

Instructors who want to implement the team oral examination in their curriculum could allow students to anonymously submit team questions to the instructor to be posed during their exam. These questions could be directly related to their specific group's process and group members' contribution. For example, the instructor could ask, 'What questions would you want me to ask?', 'What do you want to know about your group members but were afraid to bring

up?' By doing this you would engender autonomy among leadership learners which should result in greater motivation and mastery of course concepts.

I also recommend team oral examinations take place more than once over the course of the semester. The team oral examinations could be implemented at the start of a term as an initial diagnostic tool, after various modules or at the middle of a term as a formative evaluation tool, and at the end of an academic session as a cumulative or summative assessment. Ultimately, team oral exams can be molded to fit any course or curricular structure, and leadership educators can and should be creative in how to fit it into the structure of their courses.

RESEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS

This investigation was meant to explore the benefits and challenges associated with the team oral examination. This form of assessment is fairly new and not much research exists on team oral examinations. Similar future investigations can be more explanatory and dig deeper into different themes. For example, a focus on collaboration or emotional responses to the team oral examination. The research opportunities for deeply investigating team oral examinations are vast and desperately needed to understand the benefits of implementing this form of assessment.

This study was primarily informed by document analyses of a reflection paper, however; personal interviews could be beneficial to truly understand the experience associated with participating in the team oral examination. The investigator would be able to ask direct questions and observe the students as they reflect back on their experiences. With personal interviews, the investigator would not have to interpret their written responses but have the chance to dialogue about what happened during the examination, potentially finding deeper and richer themes. In addition, personal observation may yield more nuanced prompts about emotional experiences among participants.

This study took place in a fall semester when only one section of the course was offered. In the spring semesters, there are three sections. With three sections, future studies could give one section a team multiple-choice exam, the second section individualized oral examinations, and the third section a team oral examinations. By doing this one could compare results of the various interventions across all three sections. For example, comparing the median of exam results or the students' overall course grades. Comparing the results across all three sections might help clarify the academic benefits of each approach and what works best in the course and for students' success.

Although this study looked at students' experiences taking the team oral examination, it was done through the interpretations of the primary investigator. It could be beneficial to let team members grade each other's performance during the team oral examination and compare those ratings to instructor evaluations of performance. By incorporating various rater's responses to exam prompts, a more holistic picture of what student leadership learning under these conditions looks like becomes clearer. Larger lenses on student learning provide more robust recommendations on how to craft additional experiences for leadership development.

Through this study, I have been able to provide insight into administering a team oral examination in a leadership capstone course and believe that the benefits of this type of examination have proved to be an excellent pedagogy that you should be implementing in your curriculum. If you already administer team oral examinations hopefully these results can help you shape changes to your approach. If you are still unsure about team oral examinations, talk to your peers and find out who is doing this, how they are doing it, where it fits into their program. By following this study's recommendations, and asking peers, you can successfully incorporate the team oral examination into your leadership courses.

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APPENDIX A: IRB LETTER

ILLINOIS

OFFICE OF THE VICE CHANCELLOR FOR RESEARCH

Office for the Protection of Research Subjects
805 W. Pennsylvania Ave., MC-095
Urbana, IL 61801-4822

Notice of Exempt Determination

October 25, 2019

Principal Investigator	Vivechkanand Chunoo
CC	Emily Ade, Kary H. Keating
Protocol Title	*The Student Experience: Team Oral Exams in a Leadership Capstone Class*
Protocol Number	20278
Funding Source	Unfunded
Review Category	Exempt 1
Determination Date	October 25, 2019
Closure Date	October 24, 2024

This letter authorizes the use of human subjects in the above protocol. The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Office for the Protection of Research Subjects (OPRS) has reviewed your application and determined the criteria for exemption have been met.

The Principal Investigator of this study is responsible for:

- Conducting research in a manner consistent with the requirements of the University and federal regulations found at 45 CFR 46.
- Requesting approval from the IRB prior to implementing major modifications.
- Notifying OPRS of any problems involving human subjects, including unanticipated events, participant complaints, or protocol deviations.
- Notifying OPRS of the completion of the study.

Changes to an **exempt** protocol are only required if substantive modifications are requested and/or the changes requested may affect the exempt status.

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN
IORG0000014 • FWA #00008584
217.333.2670 • irb@illinois.edu • oprs.research.illinois.edu

APPENDIX B: SOCIAL BEHAVIORAL RESEARCH CONSENT FORM

Social Behavioral Research Consent Form

The Student Experience: Team Oral Exams in a Leadership Capstone Class

You are being asked to participate in a voluntary research study. The purpose of this study is to understand students' perceptions of the benefits and challenges of a team oral examination in a collaborative leadership course. Participating in this study will involve you completing the assigned team oral examination and the reflection paper following the completion of the team oral examination. We are asking for your permission to read and review your reflection paper for major patterns or themes of responses. If you choose to participate, we will not read or review your reflection paper until after final grades have been submitted by your instructor at the end of the fall 2019 term. We anticipate minimal risks associated with participation in this project; benefits related to this research include being able to reflect on the oral team examination and improving the LEAD 480 Collaborative Leadership course.

Principal Investigator Name and Title: **Dr. Vivechkanand Chunoo, Assistant Professor**
Department and Institution: **Agricultural Leadership, Education & Communication (ALEC), University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign**
Contact Information: **vchunoo@illinois.edu**

Why am I being asked?
You are being asked to be a participant in a research study about the LEAD 480 team oral examination and reflection assignment. The purpose of this research is to understand students' perceptions of the benefits and challenges of a team oral examination in a collaborative leadership course. You have been asked to participate in this research because you are a student enrolled in the class LEAD 480: Collaborative Leadership. Approximately thirty-four participants will be involved in this research at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Your participation in this research is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future dealings with the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting that relationship.

What procedures are involved?
We are asking for your permission to read and review your reflection paper about the team oral examination for major patterns or themes of responses across individuals. If you choose to participate, we will not read or review your reflection paper until after final grades have been submitted by your instructor in LEAD 480 at the end of the fall 2019 term.

What are the potential risks and discomforts?
The research will be conducted in established educational settings, involving normal educational practices, will have no more than minimal risk to influence participants' daily life and psychological or physical state.

Are there benefits to participating in the research?
The study may not provide direct benefits to the participants. However, participants might benefit indirectly from having an opportunity to reflect on the team oral examination process which may encourage future development of collaboration and communication skills. The results of this study will contribute to improving the quality of leadership courses / assignments for college students, accruing benefits to society at large.

What other options are there?
You have the option to not participate in this study. Your participation in this research is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future dealings with the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting that relationship.

Will my study-related information be kept confidential?
Faculty, staff, students, and others with permission or authority to see your study information will maintain its confidentiality to the extent permitted and required by laws and university policies. The names or personal identifiers of participants will not be published or presented.

Will I be reimbursed for any expenses or paid for my participation in this research?
You will not be offered payment for being in this study.

Can I withdraw or be removed from the study?
If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time. The researchers also have the right to stop your participation in this study without your consent if they believe it is in your best interests, you were to object to any future changes that may be made in the study plan.

Will data collected from me be used for any other research?
Your information will not be used or distributed for future use, even if identifiers are removed.

Who should I contact if I have questions?
Contact the researchers Emily Ade at emilya2@illinois.edu, Dr. Chunoo at vchunoo@illinois.edu, or Dr. Keating at keatingk@illinois.edu if you have any questions about this study or your part in it, or if you have concerns or complaints about the research.

What are my rights as a research subject?
If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this study, please contact the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Office for the Protection of Research Subjects at 217-333-2670 or irb@illinois.edu.

I have read the above information. I have been given an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this research. I will be given a copy of this signed and dated form.

_____ _____

Signature Date

_____

Printed Name

_____ _____

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent Date (must be same as subject's)

_____

Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent

APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT SCRIPT

The following was read to participants.

Emily:
You are being asked to participate in a voluntary research study. The purpose of this study is to understand students' perceptions of the benefits and challenges of a team oral examination in a collaborative leadership course. Participating in this study will involve you completing the assigned team oral examination and the reflection paper following the completion of the team oral examination. We are asking for your permission to read and review your reflection paper for major patterns or themes of responses. If you choose to participate, we will not read or review your reflection paper until after final grades have been submitted by your instructor at the end of the fall 2019 term. We anticipate minimal risks associated with participation in this project; benefits related to this research include being able to reflect on the oral team examination and improving the LEAD 480 Collaborative Leadership course.

You are being asked to be a participant in a research study about the LEAD 480 team oral examination and reflection assignment. The purpose of this research is to understand students' perceptions of the benefits and challenges of a team oral examination in a collaborative leadership course. You have been asked to participate in this research because you are a student enrolled in the class LEAD 480: Collaborative Leadership. Approximately thirty-four participants will be involved in this research at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Your participation in this research is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future dealings with the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting that relationship.

We are asking for your permission to read and review your reflection paper about the team oral examination for major patterns or themes of responses across individuals. If you choose to participate, we will not read or review your reflection paper until after final grades have been submitted by your instructor in LEAD 480 at the end of the fall 2019 term.

The research will be conducted in established educational settings, involving normal educational practices, which will have no more than minimal risk to influence participants' daily life and psychological or physical state.

The study may not provide direct benefits to the participants. However, participants might benefit indirectly from having an opportunity to reflect on the team oral examination process which may encourage future development of collaboration and communication skills. The results of this study will contribute to improving the quality of leadership courses/assignments for college students, accruing benefits to society at large.

You have the option to not participate in this study. Your participation in this research is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future dealings with the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting that relationship.

Faculty, staff, students and others with permission or authority to see your study information will maintain its confidentiality to the extent permitted and required by laws and university policies. The names or personal identifiers of participants will not be published or presented.

You will not be offered payment for being in this study.

If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time. The researchers also have the right to stop your participation in this study without your consent if they believe it is in your best interests, you were to object to any future changes that may be made in the study plan.

Your information will not be used or distributed for future use, even if identifiers are removed.

Contact the researchers Emily Ade at emilya2@illinois.edu, Dr. Chunoo at vchunoo@illinois.edu, or Dr. Keating at keatingk@illinois.edu if you have any questions about this study or your part in it, or if you have concerns or complaints about the research.

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this study, please contact the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Office for the Protection of Research Subjects at 217-333-2670 or irb@illinois.edu.

APPENDIX D: REFLECTION PROMPT

Reflect on the team exam process. Apply terms and concepts from this course.