

An extra set of eyes and ears: Peer collaboration within a Bachelor of Education (Honours) research project

As part of the Bachelor of Education Honours (B.Ed.Hons) degree, students in the Faculty of Education at Stellenbosch University are introduced to their first formal research project with a supervisor assigned to them. It can be daunting for a student to enter the world of research, especially since supervisors may struggle to allocate sufficient time to research supervision, among their many other duties.

Peer collaboration is well-recognised in higher education and education generally and literature supports the idea of peer collaboration as broadening the research experience.

This study used a case study research design to explore how B.Ed.Hons students experienced peer collaboration as part of their research projects, to establish the benefits and challenges of being part of a peer collaboration process during research.

The study found that peer collaboration led to significant academic and emotional/social benefits for students. These included the expansion of knowledge on the research project, help with fears, providing a listening ear, dampening the feeling of loneliness and motivating each other to finish their research projects. A social benefit that stood out was the vital role that friendship played throughout the peer collaboration process.

Academic and emotional/social challenges included fears of plagiarism, a lack of physical contact during the pandemic, time management around peer collaboration and concerns about bothering peers.

The study recommends that although peer collaboration cannot replace the role of the supervisor, it can enhance the learning environment of research, especially for B.Ed.Hons students.

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