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**An inquiry into students' and teachers' perceptions and  
use of small group work (SGW) teaching and learning  
experiences within an international school environment**

**A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the  
requirements for the degree of**

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## Abstract

Research into 21<sup>st</sup> century education has consistently indicated that a key element of preparation for the contemporary workplace is the fostering of skills in collaboration, including the ability to negotiate with others. Furthermore, the advantages for language learners (LLs) in the midst of collaborative small group work (SGW) teams has been demonstrated time and time again in the literature.

The approach undertaken drew on Exploratory Practice (EP), evolving into an inquiry into the perceptions of Diploma Programme (DP) school students and their teachers. Ultimately it provides insights into their views on the implementation of a SGW approach as a means of gaining access to grade level curriculum within a multilingual, International Baccalaureate (IB)-accredited school environment, in Germany, where the core curriculum is delivered in English.

Data was gathered from the students and teachers in this particular context using multiple data-collection tools, including both quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews over a period of ten weeks. The findings suggest that, overall, both teachers and students have a favourable view of a SGW approach. However, a number of implications have also been drawn regarding the polarity of perceptions uncovered in some instances, specifically with regards to the teaching and learning of subject specific language, and the degree of scaffolding that effective use of SGW requires.

The study culminates with several recommendations such as the fostering and maintenance of an institutional climate that celebrates diversity; the on-going professional development for teachers in SGW management techniques and practices; the need for institutional investment in terms of sufficient time and space to implement SGW training, as well as time and purpose-built spaces to deliver SGW more effectively; and finally more active collaboration between teachers and their students, for guiding and informing pedagogical practice, and specifically aimed at enhancing the outcomes for ELLs within similar international school settings.

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