COLLABORATIVE WORKING

Educators and students need better tools to reap the benefits of collaborative learning

Group work (collaborative learning) is commonly used throughout higher education to help students develop a host of skills increasingly important in the academic and professional world including enhancing leadership skills and taught knowledge of task division[1]. While there are significant potential learning benefits of collaborative learning, simply assigning group work will not guarantee achieving those outcomes. If not correctly designed, supervised and assessed in a way that promotes meaningful teamwork and collaboration, group projects can backfire[2]. Many educators/lecturers are lacking specific knowledge in how to support student group work and need more support in the design and implementation of collaborative learning. Moreover, students are not provided with specific group working skills or tools. These two factors together can in result in unnecessary frustration, stress, team communication issues, slackers and lower quality of work.

Group coaching to enhance collaborative learning

Group coaching paired with tools based on Agile methodology will help shape highly effective teams by promoting psychological safety, team dynamics/performance and collaboration. The tools are primarily taught through lectures and individual group coaching sessions as well as follow-up group sessions.

Coaching relieves educators by teaching and supporting students with:

- Project management tools such as: planning, structure, prioritizing, setting common goals, working on a timeline etc.

- Communication tools such as: team group rules, scheduling meetings, retrospective meetings, follow up meetings, how to give and receive feedback etc.

The key benefits

▶ Helping build teamwork skills by overcoming group work issues, providing a more positive experience for both students and educators.

▶ Students develop important team working skills based on the ones already used in the industry.

The Agile methodology

Agile is a value-driven project management approach adopted by approximately half of firms today[3], which enables organizations to master continuous change is today's fast paced world. The methodology is implemented through a number of frameworks (e.g. Lean, Scrum, Kanban), with the goal of enabling teams to create maximum value by collaboration, self-organization, and cross functionality.

[1]Colbeck, C. L., Campbell, S. E., & Bjorklund, S. A. (2000). Grouping in the dark: What college students learn from group projects. The Journal of Higher Education, 71(1), 60-83.
[2]Caruso, H.M., & Wooley, A.W. (2008). Harnessing the power of emergent interdependence to promote diverse team collaboration. Diversity and Groups. 11, 245-266).
[3]Consultancy.uk (2018)