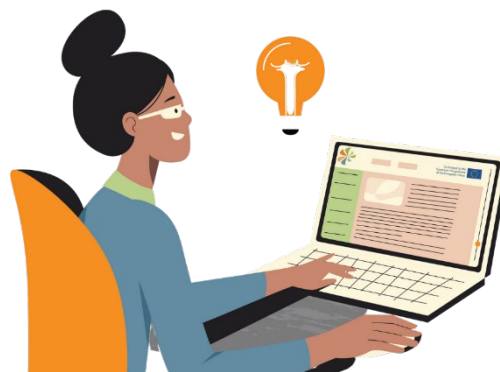




ENTRE**COMP**EDU

# Module 3: Teaching and Training

## Go Deeper 3.5 Stages of Collaborative Learning



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## Stages of Collaborative learning

An old African proverb suggests that 'if you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.'<sup>1</sup> The question of whether one is more productive working alone or in a group has long been debated. Introverts and extroverts are likely to offer different answers.<sup>2</sup> But the vast majority of good ideas that lead to innovation involve many people working together. Studies of the most radical breakthroughs - including the television, airplane, radio, e-mail, and even board games such as Monopoly- show that they emerged from collaboration.<sup>3</sup> And even when individual flashes of insight occur, the implementation of ideas is almost always a collective effort. It was Isaac Newton (1676) who famously said: 'If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants.'

Although working well with others is widely recognised as an important entrepreneurial competence, how do you support its development among students? More than fifty years ago, the psychologist Bruce Tuckman (1965) put forward a theory which sought to explain the different stages of team development (Figure 3.5.1). Although this theory focused on business organizations, it is worth reflecting on how it applies in education.

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<sup>1</sup> Cited by Hemming, H. (2011) Together, John Murray, p.63.

<sup>2</sup> For example, Susan Cain's (2012) Quiet is a strong counterargument to those who push for collaboration as basis for creative thinking. Cain was a shy child herself and argues that we neglect value of taking time to be alone, reflect quietly and be creative.

<sup>3</sup> Sawyer, K. (2007) Group Genius: The Creative Power of Collaboration, Jossey Bass.



## Stages in team development

Forming - when the team first meet and agree goals and start to develop trust

Storming - when differences of opinion are expressed and there are issues of power/control

Norming - when members agree on roles and responsibilities, building consensus

Performing - when trust is established and the team care for each other and works at their peak

Adjourning - when the team assesses progress and contributions.<sup>4</sup>

The last stage is sometimes referred to as the 'mourning' stage.



Figure 3.5.1 Typical journey from forming to adjourning

<sup>4</sup> Tuckman, B. W. (1965). 'Developmental sequence in small groups'. Psychological Bulletin, 63(6), 384-399.

The [University of Glasgow](https://www.glasgow.ac.uk/) offers advice on how to support students as they move through the stages of team development (Figure 3.5.2):

| Forming to Storming   | Storming to Norming  | Norming to Performing   |
|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish and communicate the reason for the team – the mission</li> <li>• Set goals</li> <li>• Identify roles within the team</li> <li>• Establish ways to build trust within the team</li> <li>• Leader needs to be directive and assert their position</li> <li>• Bring the team together on a regular basis to work on joint projects</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The leader must set expectations with the team and should expect the team to deliver results</li> <li>• Leader should support positive team behaviour</li> <li>• Team leader should create a positive environment in which to work</li> <li>• Achievements must be recognised and celebrated</li> <li>• Team members recognise individuals' roles and expertise</li> <li>• Feedback is requested, accepted, and acted upon</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Praise each other</li> <li>• Share responsibility</li> <li>• Delegate freely within the team</li> <li>• Communicate and keep every team member up to date</li> <li>• Share success</li> <li>• Commit time to the team</li> <li>• Evaluate their performance and strive to achieve more challenging objectives</li> <li>• Share leadership based upon individual skills sets</li> <li>• Are selective when recruiting new team members</li> <li>• Work to maintain team spirit</li> </ul> |

*Figure 3.5.2 Stages in the development of collaboration*

It is highly likely that you will encounter a range of behaviours that inhibit effective groupwork. Table 3.5.1 provides some suggestions on how to address the most common challenges including those demonstrated by facilitators.



| Challenge  | Possible solutions   |
|--|--|
| Students not participating                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remind the whole group of the benefits of equal participation.</li> <li>• Clarify the group learning briefing.</li> <li>• Consider making the assessment of contribution to the work of the group more explicit.</li> <li>• Confront a non-participant directly.</li> <li>• Try to find out if there is a good reason for non-participation.</li> <li>• Explore whether non-participation could be a cry for help.</li> <li>• Check, with care, whether the problem is with the work rather than with the group.</li> <li>• Check whether non-participation could be a reaction against the facilitator.</li> </ul> |
| Student dominating group                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have a quiet word with the domineer.</li> <li>• Get the whole group to do a process review.</li> <li>• Watch out for why people dominate.</li> </ul>  |
| Facilitator being too didactic or controlling    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Don't try to hurry group learning too much.</li> <li>• Hide your knowledge and wisdom sometimes.</li> <li>• Allow group students to learn from mistakes.</li> <li>• Plan processes rather than outcomes</li> <li>• Ask your students.</li> <li>• Learning from selected colleagues.</li> </ul>  |
| Facilitator showing lack of cultural sensitivity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read about it.</li> <li>• Watch other group-learning facilitators, with this agenda in mind.</li> <li>• Don't make assumptions.</li> <li>• Talk to group members individually.</li> <li>• Ask directly sometimes.</li> </ul>  |
| Facilitator talking too much                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remind yourself that most learning happens by doing, rather than listening.</li> <li>• Don't allow yourself to be tempted into filling every silence.</li> <li>• Only say some of the things you think.</li> <li>• Don't let them let you talk too much!</li> <li>• Present some of your thoughts (particularly longer ones) in print.</li> </ul>   |

Table 3.5.1. Common challenges in groupwork and possible solutions<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup><https://www2.le.ac.uk/offices/lli/developing-learning-and-teaching/enhance/strategies/small-group/facilitator-behaviour>



The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF, 2018) defines collaborative learning as an 'approach which involves pupils working together on activities and learning tasks in small enough groups that everyone is able to participate in the assigned collective task. Pupils may work on separate tasks contributing to an overall outcome or work together on a shared task.'<sup>6</sup> The EEF argues that the impact of collaborative learning is consistently positive, although it concedes that group size and poor planning can affect this. The most impactful learning occurs when tasks are well-designed and there is time for students to talk and interact.

### Activity

Read through the evidence-based guidance on promoting effective group work available [here](#). How does this help with concerns over those students who do not contribute as they should?



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<sup>6</sup> EEF (2018) Teaching and Learning Toolkit - collaborative learning. The Collaborative Learning project (2018) is a teacher network which shares resources to support effective group work and 'talk for learning,' [www.collaborativelearning.org](http://www.collaborativelearning.org)

