

## Chapter 3

# A Collaborative Active Learning Model as a Vehicle for Online Team Learning in Higher Education

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### ABSTRACT

*As more higher education faculty use team-based assignments in online courses across a wide range of university disciplines, research on team learning as one of the pedagogical approaches in higher education has become more relevant. The authors reviewed active learning as a type of instructional method for team members' satisfaction and active engagement in their learning processes. Therefore, this chapter explores team learning as an effective online learning model that also facilitates effective use of learning management systems (LMS). Additionally, the chapter examines essential strategies to work and learn as a successful team in an online setting. With the intent of supporting faculty and practitioners of higher education who adopt an online team learning method, the authors propose an active learning model for online team learning and specific guidelines to utilize the model.*

### INTRODUCTION

Higher education faculty are using team-based assignments in online courses across a wide range of university disciplines as students' teamwork experience influences their learning as well as future employment (Eison, 2010; Beyerlein & Han, 2016). Therefore, the research on team learning as one of the

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pedagogical approaches in higher education (Han & Beyerlein, 2016; Han, Liau-Hing, & Beyerlein, 2016) has become more relevant. Team learning also facilitates effective use of learning management systems (LMS). Even though many institutions require faculty to assign team-based work using LMS (Palsolé & Awalt, 2008), many faculty do not know how to facilitate student team learning or design the team activities effectively in online classrooms. Many instructors find little time for teaching students the skills of effective teamwork, and instructors themselves have not had much opportunity for online team competency development. In addition, very few researchers have attempted to identify strategies and interventions used to overcome those challenges in team learning contexts (Zaccaro & Bader, 2003).

Within team learning environments, facilitation of active learning for learner satisfaction and learning involvement is critical. Active learning is a type of instructional method allowing learners' active engagement in their learning processes. In an active learning mode, learners can specify their own learning needs, identify learning resources, undertake self-directed learning, and manage learning tasks leading to further reflections and applications (Bonwell, Eison, & Association for the Study of Higher Education, 1991). Owing to the many strengths of active learning, this method has been adopted as the main process of various contemporary learning approaches such as problem-based learning (Barrows & Wee, 2007), flipped classroom (Prober & Khan, 2013), and action learning (Dilworth, 1996). The strengths of active learning include: (a) learners become energetic; (b) learners are emotionally involved; (c) learners relate learning to career goals and reflection on life; (d) learners are mentally aroused and challenged (Hollingsworth & Lewis, 2006). While the benefits of active learning are numerous, researchers have been negligent in investigating how active learning is established in a team learning environment within a higher education setting. More specifically, research has rarely been sought to identify how active learning processes are established in online team learning contexts and what variables positively or negatively affect active learning in a higher education online learning context (Han, Han, Lim, & Yoon, 2015). Therefore, with the intention of supporting faculty and practitioners of higher education who adopt an online team learning method, we propose an active learning model for online learning and specific guidelines to utilize the model.

## **Study Purpose**

The purpose is to establish an active learning model to facilitate online team learning and to suggest best practices of active learning utilizing various LMS within higher education settings. This research study strives to answer the following research questions to address the research needs:

1. What is an optimal model of active learning for online team learning?
2. What are the necessary skills when facilitating active learning in teams?
3. How can educators apply the active learning model for effective online team learning?

By answering these questions, we expect to address new ways to foster students' team learning skills in higher education settings. In order to address the research purpose and questions in regards to active learning, the following sections discuss design principles for online team learning and applications of active learning in an online team learning environment.

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