

Leading Group Projects with Emotional Intelligence LCLM 5006

INTRODUCTION

Emotional Intelligence (EI) is the ability to feel, understand, control and use emotions in oneself and others (MacCann et al., 2020). EI is a must-have skill in university group projects. When students are working with a team and studying under pressure, there are many opportunities for conflict to emerge, as well as a lack of equal workload and deadline-related stress, that could negatively impact team unity and student well-being. By equipping students with the skills of EI, they will be able to handle the interpersonal issues in a constructive way and will create a motivated, inclusive, and high-performing team environment.

SECTION 1 - EI IN TEAMWORK

What ways can EI support students to be effective group workers?

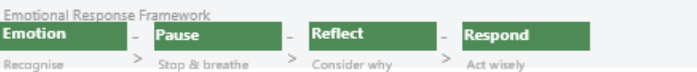
Goleman's 5 Core EI Competencies

Self-Awareness | Self-Regulation | Motivation | Empathy | Social Skills

Five core EI competencies are directly applicable to group work: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills (MacCann et al., 2020). Self-awareness enables students to recognise how their emotional state affects their contributions. Self-regulation helps to maintain a calm and measured reaction to conflict or last minute stress, avoiding unnecessary escalation. Intrinsic motivation helps to keep people proactively involved even when obstacles become greater and greater. Empathy allows for true understanding of teammates' pressures and differing points of view. Role negotiation, communication and group cohesion are facilitated by strong social skills. These skills, when applied together, shift interpersonal conflict to problem solving. Sanchez-Alvarez, Berrios Martos and Extremera (2020) verify that students with a higher EI have a better ability to coordinate actions effectively, resolve conflicts fairly, and maintain the morale of the team over the course of the project.

SECTION 2 - MANAGING OWN EMOTIONS

How can students stay productive and reduce stress?



Often in group projects, students feel stress, frustration and anxiety, leading to poor productivity and working relationships. Brackett et al. (2019) stress that emotional regulation is a skill that can be learned, and is vitally important for success in the classroom and in collaboration with others. Mindfulness - a state of "noticing and noticing not" and staying in the present moment, helps students to avoid the temptation of responding to obstacles, failures or criticism in an impulsive and uninformed way. Reflective journalling is a process that can identify patterns in your responses to emotions and behaviours that don't help your situation. Structured breathing/Time- blocking techniques to maintain concentration in stressful situations. There are a few methods for managing emotional reactions:

Emotion -> Pause -> Reflect -> Respond.

Throughout the most challenging parts of a group project, the use of this process maintains team relationships and individual productivity.

SECTION 3 - UNDERSTANDING OTHERS' EMOTIONS

How does empathy improve communication and team success?

Key Empathetic Behaviours

Active Listening - Full attention, no interruption

Perspective-Taking - Consider teammates' circumstances

Constructive Feedback - Behaviour-focused, not personal

Empathy is the capacity to understand and experience another person's emotions and is a key aspect of working well in groups. Sanchez-Alvarez, Berrios Martos and Extremera (2020) show that emotionally intelligent people are very good at interpreting emotional information in social environments and applying this information to making decisions and communicating. Empathy in group project work is expressed in active listening, that is, listening to colleagues without interrupting them and acknowledging their concerns. Perspective-taking helps students to think about why a colleague might be withdrawn or not engaged rather than think that they are not interested. Giving feedback in an empathetic way (towards behaviours but not personality) decreases defensiveness and interpersonal trust. It is through these practices, together, that a psychologically safe team culture is developed that values all team members, listens to them and sees the potential in them to contribute.

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

Emotional Intelligence is an important, hands-on skill that directly enhances group project results. Students who gain the abilities of self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy and social skills are positioned to better manage conflict, decrease stress and create inclusive team dynamics (MacCann et al., 2020; Sanchez-Alvarez, Berrios Martos and Extremera, 2020). Implementing EI principles regularly reshapes the dynamics of a group, fosters respect and helps all team members flourish.

Practical Recommendations

- Practicing being mindful every day to manage emotional responses when things go haywire.
- Review the contribution of emotions to group dynamics weekly.
- Use active listening skills with all team meetings.
- Offer and solicit positive and compassionate input on a regular basis.

METHOD / REFLECTION

Information gathered through:

- Group project and personal experience
- Students will conduct a literature review of both academic journals and textbooks (EI journals & textbooks).
- Peers' collaborative behaviours observed
- Presentation, full reflection to be discussed.

REFERENCES (HARVARD)

Brackett, M.A., Bailey, C.S., Hoffmann, J.D. and Simmons, D.N. (2019) 'RULER: A theory-driven, systemic approach to social, emotional, and academic learning', *Educational Psychologist*, 54(3), pp. 144-161.

MacCann, C., Jiang, Y., Brown, L.E.R., Double, K.S., Bucich, M. and Minbashian, A. (2020) 'Emotional intelligence predicts academic performance: A meta-analysis', *Psychological Bulletin*, 146(2), pp. 150-186.

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