Team-Based Learning At Alfaisal University: Where we are now and how did we get there?

Sadia Qazi, Muhammad Atif Mazhar, Abdul Ahad Sheikh, Abdul Jabar Rasool

Alfaisal University

Analyzing through the lens of Complexity theory

What?

Team-based learning is one of the teaching learning methodology used in our institution. It was a decision at the edge of uncertainty to accommodate a large number of students. It was an infinite game as the agents (faculty, students, administration) and their interactions was creating a pattern of disagreement about the program. The interdependent pairs within faculty (traditional vs modern school of thought) and students (passive vs active learning) were easily identifiable. A TBL team was formed to set conditions for others to create patterns of successful performance and I am the part of it. The team worked through inquiry process to shift the tension pattern to a constructive one by starting TBL initially as a hybrid model where lectures were traditionally placed in the schedule and TBL sessions were conducted at the end of the week which covers the learning outcomes of the week. This was done for the initial buy-in, to gain confidence of the students and faculty who were not comfortable with the change.

So what?

The team was enthusiastic for the improvement of the program. The members of the team attended extensive workshops for TBL for evidence-based practices and improvement of the program. Although there was no idea about adaptive action cycle but formative assessment about the program was informally done to improve the design by changing conditions for improving students' performance (change of TBL assigned days from last working day to first working day of the week, provision of clear LOs, improved quality of MCQs according to NBME guidelines, weekly review of the TBL material, introduction of immediate response scratch cards for immediate feedback during t-RAT, peer evaluation etc.)and converted it into a better TBL in our context. To apply learning from this course, I suggested using CDE model for evaluating TBL through STAR assessment tool to reflect on our TBL practice. It helped us in identifying our strengths and challenges and it was decided that although the changes done enhanced the students learning and performance but still learning was out of balance as it was not following the ideal TBL format where students are expected to be active learners and accountable for their own learning by using resource materials to achieve LOs as the students were still relying on lectures till this academic year 2018-2019 which is now completed

Now what?

This led to the decision of shift the TBL towards its ideal form the next academic year 2019-2020 to make the better, excellent enough. This authentic work is also approved by the curriculum committee. This decision created a shift from a stable, close to agreement and certainty in our TBL program to an emergent but very close to unstable program where there is far less agreement and certainty on Landscape diagram. It is fluid, sensitive and responsive.

To change our present position on the landscape diagram, we have decided to follow the following step/rules to move towards more certainty and agreement by creating conditions which will not under-constrain the system; for meaningful students' learning and to bridge the gap between the advocates of hybrid and ideal TBL.
1 Facilitate students learning by creating meaningful resource material for TBL preparation.
2. Convert hybrid TBL to ideal TBL by creating meaningful readiness assurance and application exercises to enhance authentic student-centered collaborative learning.
3. Bring a solution/fix to every complaint by listening to faculty/student's perspective.
We will also use mixed methods (quantitative and qualitative) to evaluate the resultant patterns and decide on our next what of adaptive action cycle and keep evaluating.
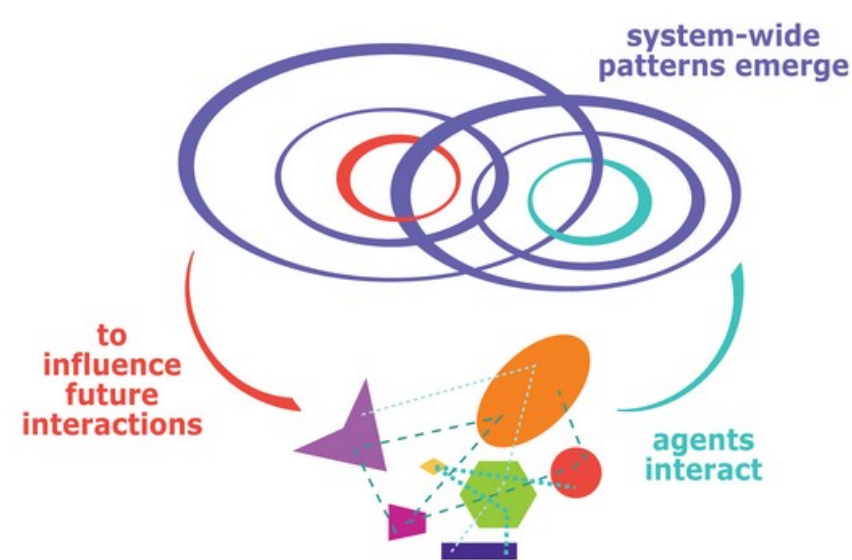
References:

1. Wolf-Branigin M. Using complexity theory for research and program evaluation. Oxford University Press; 2013 Mar 7.
2. Stacey R. Tools and techniques of leadership and management: Meeting the challenge of complexity. Routledge; 2012 Jun 25.
3. Patton MQ. Developmental evaluation: Applying complexity concepts to enhance innovation and use. Guilford Press; 2010 Jun 14.