

COVID-19: THE DAWN OF A NEW AGE FOR REIMAGINING EFFECTIVE ACADEMIC IMPLEMENTATION

When things change towards the best there is more reason to just live and maybe progress, but when things change towards the unplanned worse, then just living without counter plans is in itself a retrogression on life. While the formula does not come to us on a silver platter, the latter definitely makes for more reason to think, reimagine and shape life towards a progressive trajectory. Call it agile thinking.

The educational sector have had a fair share of the inevitable changes influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic just like most dimensions of life. Students and teachers have got to experience the dawn of a new high digital age in academic implementation like never before. Academic managers are brooding on management perspectives that counter the full force of COVID-19 on the academic calendar. In effect schools are still running, but on academic implemental plans that reinforces principles of social distancing. It has just not been the same and you can call it "the sudden unplanned change" or better still "the rude awakening" of the mainstream digital academic age.

In one academic setting (Tampere Universities) the reaction and preconceived thoughts of some students to the efforts of the sudden improvising academic management did not sit in well for some students, at least from the beginning. Well it was a new situation. Students' ardent concerns and discussions on the next academic management move with regard to social distancing suggested the fear of the possibility to adjust well and to be able to graduate.

To some the fear have not been the changes in academic implementation mediums (online/eLearning) itself, but the impacting effects of the unfamiliar changes: *'I believe the downsides of using these platforms (digital platforms) are more related with people not being used to them and perhaps some people being more socially inclined and thus less motivated by online learning, than the tools used having any notable imperfections'* – students most popular opinion polls on the survey.

In a survey this has proven to be true both in the case of students and teachers. Some students were ready to talk and contribute how they will better be served or be factored in the COVID-19 influenced management readjustment by academic implementers.

This gave birth to the developmental thought of a holistic and agile management considerations through this research in order to maintain or create new value streams through the inevitable changes regardless, sans tearing down value. Value-add in this sense therefore mean building appreciable levels of academic systemization under the pandemic, in agile fashions that do not necessarily retrogress the appreciation for pre-COVID-19 academic systems and culture. The goal therefore is to add to it or maintain the existing appreciable levels despite the change.

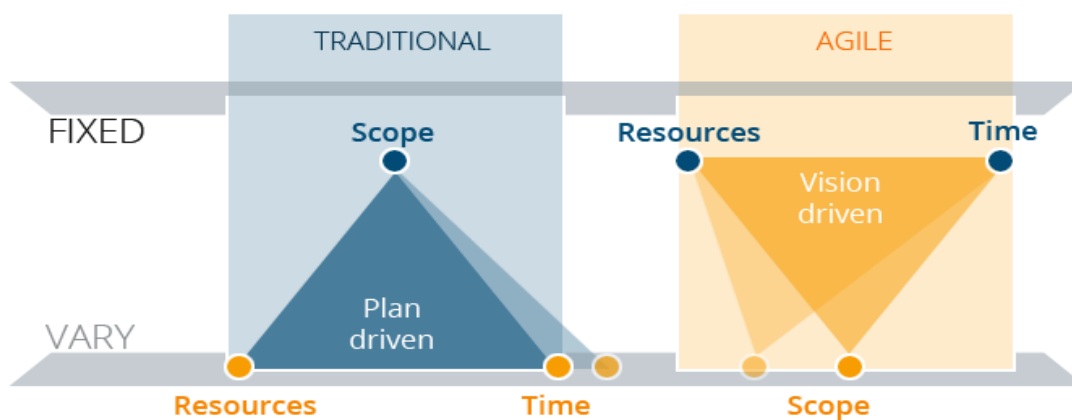
Hence in a research, about 70 students and teachers at Tampere Universities were asked questions on the impacting effects of the sudden academic changes, mostly in relation to the sudden eLearning shift. Various contributions gave a briefing overview from students' perspective on how the COVID-19 has impeded academic implementation and also how this issues have been handled by the academic managers. Better still few commendations suggest better ways the academic change process could possibly be considered in agile retrospect in order to create value.

AGILE MANAGEMENT RELATION TO THE SUDDEN ACADEMIC IMPLEMENTATION CHANGES

The concept of agile management have mostly been discussed in relation to project management or software development. The underlying principles of the concept however has a generic perspective to management.

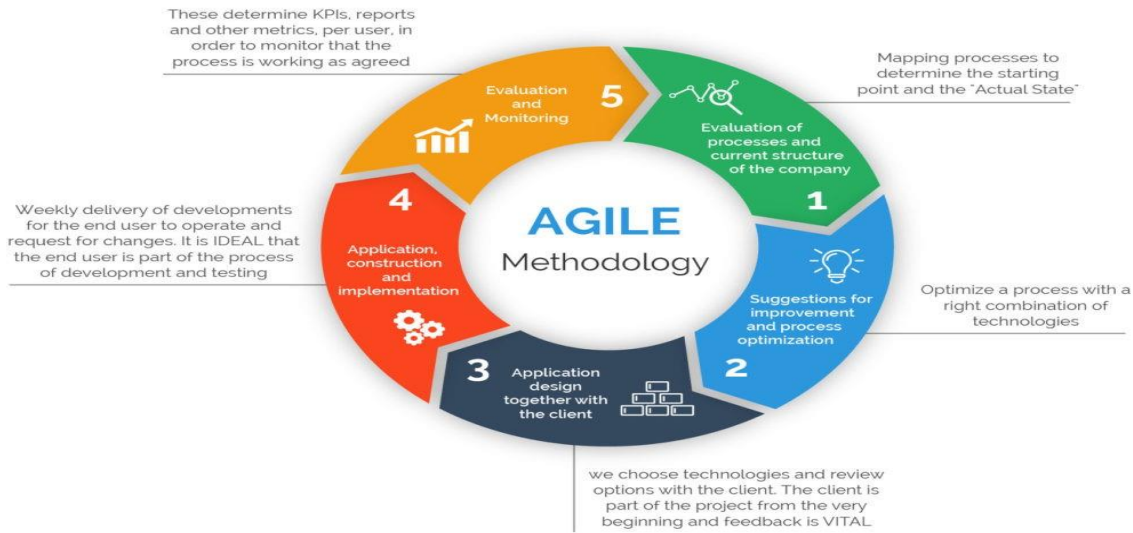
In the typical commercial world, business managers have strategized towards agile modes in responses to a VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexities and Ambiguity) world environment. Individuals with flexible mind set are most likely to thrive over the ever changing situation, these individuals termed agile learners who will quickly learn from past experience and move forward with evolving ideas are better prepared to face tomorrows world. (Micheal W. 2017)

The agile mindset therefore is the rolling ability to be flexible, think and plan according to changing circumstances.



As seen in the figure above, agile is more vision driven and hinges on a varying pendulum of scope. Traditional methods may look to a fixed scope and plan. Agile is responsive to situational calls or

alteration to scope towards better embrace and fluidity to change. In this sense, it can be said, following a plan is good but responding to changes through a flexible plan is even more important.



By relation, academic implementation and the current changes in academic trends should inform academic managers to relook at academic systems and processes with different lens. That should be based mainly on meaningful behaviors and actual needs of students, teachers and other academic workers in order to optimize value in a holistic academic conditions of the current remote learning systemization.

The agile process therefore may require some of the redesigned procedures in academic implementation to be inclusive of students and teachers and to be observed and adjusted overtime in order to restore value under the COVID-19 influence and similar disruptions.

BRIDGING THE eLEARNING FAMILIARITY GAP FOR STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

Students and teachers through this research work have expressed the need for better familiarity and capacity creation as a most concerns for coping with the pandemic scare on the academic re-structuring. Both teachers and students expressed the overwhelming nature of the sudden eLearning transition. Various procedures for bridging the familiarity gap have been suggested. For one, 2.7 out of 5 average familiarity rating by students suggests that, until now, students have not been formerly exposed to the idea of eLearning neither do they have the relative familiarity associated to the tools used (Microsoft Teams, Zoom, Google Meet etc.). In preparedness for the uncertainties of future education, the concept of eLearning should briefly be introduced in the elementary schools as a predisposition to future academic uncertainties.

Students on the other hand are rating teachers efficiency and familiarity on the use of those tools at 62% averaging, whilst teachers admit to somewhat overwhelming discomfort on the use of those tools. Teachers therefore should be brought to speed on the use of the online tools for academic implementation both for their comfort and efficiency and for a better experience for their students. Workshop and trainings sections on this is highly recommended. Also at this point researching and instilling the best practices on eLearning teaching techniques in teachers qualification curriculum should

help with familiarity and preparedness for academically threatening eventualities just as presented by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The biggest academic implementation lesson learnt here is that the option of going through ones entire educational life without an eLearning exposure is possibly over. And out of this comes surviving product of preparedness for remote working.

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