



Agile Learning and Teaching with Miro Boards

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Educators use agile and transparent learning procedures that require students to analyze, assess and critique theoretical perspectives. This paper highlights the use of Miro board technology, allowing students to engage in collaborative team work to create a visual representation of a theory, increasing their proficiency as a theory driven occupational therapist. Students reported that Miro boards decreased feelings of isolation, created a sense of community, encouraged creativity, and promoted a collaborative, meaningful learning experience. Effective teaching during the COVID pandemic provided learners multiple opportunities to track their learning progress with substantive and timely feedback.

Introduction and Background

Agile teaching includes student-centered instruction, working in teams, providing feedback that is quick, given often, and is fluid and flexible during classroom interactions (Krehbiel et al., 2017). The goal of agile teaching is working to foster student ownership of the learning process, having students doing or being active in their learning to ensure that they analyze, assess, and critique a higher level of Bloom's taxonomy. An agile teacher introduces a scaffolding approach of concepts, requiring the student to self-reflect and make adaptations and modifications. This fluid process is amplified by the teacher also being agile and practicing self-reflection throughout the learning process.

Agile teaching can be enhanced by implementing concepts of transparency. Winkelmes et al. (2016) found that transparency designed assignments lead to greater learning experiences and benefits of increased confidence, sense of belonging, and mastery of skills. Zoe and Walton (2020) propose several agile teaching concepts, starting with putting the individual and the interaction over the process and focusing on the meaning instead of measurement, to amplify the learning process. The authors further recommend using collaboration as a learning tool in lieu of negotiations and teaching adaptability to respond to change when following a plan. Lastly, the author's stress applying newly learned skills over memorizing facts, and most importantly, creating a fail-safe learning

environment. Sharp and Lang (2018) espouse that agile learning requires communication, simplicity, feedback, and courage. Miro boards facilitate collaboration, application of knowledge and fluidity in a fail-safe environment as feedback is given by peers and the professor throughout the building and learning process.

Program Context & Strategy

Agile teaching and transparency requires that feedback be given by the professor and also every member of a group in real time, creating a collaborative learning platform. To offer an agile, transparent learning opportunity, Miro boards were used as part of the Occupational Therapy Post Professional Doctoral program at Eastern Kentucky University, replacing the use of a Wiki board. The assignment was part of the Advanced Occupational Science class as the students were allocated an occupational therapy theory. Using collaboration, sharing of information about the theory, teamwork, and trust of self and team members, the students were able to illustrate the theory relationships and procedures. As a teaching tool, Miro boards were presented with transparency, informing the students that they were trusted to share, collaborate, use trial and error, take risks, and use frequent and consistent communication to build trust within the team. For the student, the Miro boards reduced their isolation, establishing a sense of community with the students feeling connected. The transparent component of the platform promoted creativity in a fail-safe environment. The assignment was presented on blackboard, discussed in weekly student hours and the due date was extended to two weeks, allowing time for the group process. COVID required new teaching practices of reaching out to students diligently to decrease isolation and being flexible, adaptable and transparent, which Miro boards allowed. This paper highlights the impact of using Miro boards on student learning.

Assessment: How Miro Boards Work

Miro board (miro.com) markets itself as a fast, free, and simple-to-use digital whiteboard built as an online collaborative platform. According to the Miro board website, it fulfills several needs for approximately 20 million users: telecommuting, hybrid teams, remote work, or team research. Miro board begins as an infinite canvas with users having the freedom to host digital brainstorm sessions, document meetings, research and design, plan and strategize, teach a class, or manage agile workflows. Although Miro board has several tools for users to build and develop ideas, most of the online reviews indicate that people find its interface easy to use.

Miro board provides learners the opportunity to engage with one another in active learning experiences such as mind mapping, brainstorming, synthesizing information, and the analysis of course content. In online courses, as learners interact with one another, the Miro board increases the learner presence. Educators in the Department of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy use Miro board, so learners work together to understand the relationships between complex ideas. In a sense, then, Miro Board resolves the biggest criticism of the Community of Inquiry Model, namely that this framework for online learning primarily focuses on the effectiveness of teaching while ignoring the role of the learner in acquiring knowledge and experience (Shea & Bidjerano, 2010).

A learner may begin a Miro board activity with the fear that others will automatically reject their idea. As a consequence of this fear, learners must take a risk as they articulate their ideas. To cope with the fear of failure, learners must quickly develop respect and convey appreciation for the ideas of their peers. As a digital application, Miro board makes it safe to fail. The learners always have the options to erase what they write and insert into the board, undo their mistakes, or redo their accidental deletion of ideas. These features in Miro board minimize the consequences of failure, helping learners feel comfortable with trying something new.

In the Spring 2021 semester, we asked the learners to identify topics, sub-topics, examples, and applications to include in a mind map of an occupational therapy theory. This activity especially highlighted the transparency of the Miro board in two ways. First, the learners watched their peers in the process of understanding course material. Second, the instructor had the ability to measure learner progress in the activity. Learners used the conversation board to have an ongoing dialogue about their creation. Learners could also pin a comment to a particular element of their creation in order to highlight and explain its significance on the canvas. Overall, Miro Board offers learners a unique online-collaboration tool that promotes agile learning. Learners create, collaborate, and communicate their ideas in a fail-safe environment. Miro Board can transform learners from passive absorbers of information to active participants in a transparent learning environment.

Student Perspectives

Student #1

As a student enrolled in an online program, I have always enjoyed activities that enhance the ability to work collaboratively with my peers, despite where we

live. I remember looking through the required assignments for the course and thinking, “What is a Miro board?” Being asked to complete an assignment using an unfamiliar technology can be intimidating, and the Miro assignment was no exception. To ease anxiety and increase the comfort level, our class was provided with an introductory “how to” video that introduced the class to the basic foundation of designing a Miro board.

Our class was divided into groups of four students. The Miro platform was new to everyone in my particular group and therefore, we engaged in trial and error as we designed our Miro board. Additionally, the professor shared that this was also a new technology for her, which helped create a safe-to-fail environment in our learning process. In essence, the professor was learning along with the students as the assignment was being completed. This allowed the students to feel more comfortable asking questions and taking risks as they explored the Miro platform. Creating a Miro board utilized active learning within the virtual environment. Personally, the assignment allowed me to connect and communicate ideas with my classmates, regardless of our different geographic locations across the country. We found ourselves discussing the content as we created the board and even problem solving along the way. Most importantly, all of the group members engaged in the completion of our Miro board.

The Miro platform allowed each group member to use their creative skills to express the relationship of information and content in a visual and aesthetically pleasing way. The size of the board could be adjusted to fit the information and Miro boards have a collection of colors, texts, and shapes to enhance the presentation. This tool also offers the ability to embed videos, images, or additional content. The platform helped create a visual narrative of a topic. Utilizing all of these tools allows students to include the most comprehensive information on the board in a fun and interesting way.

Being in an online program, I know how difficult it can be to connect with others. The Miro platform enables group members to view edits that have been made and allows comments. For me, it felt as if I was working in the same room with my group members. I appreciated the opportunity to complete a group assignment through the use of the Miro platform. It helped involve me in learning the content. Overall, creating a Miro Board offers active learning and creativity through a true collaborative learning process in real-time that can benefit educational group projects.

Student #2

As an Occupational Therapist in a Post-Professional Doctoral of Occupational Therapy program, I have been provided the opportunity to learn in new and exciting ways. Through the innovative Miro board assignment, I feel that the students were challenged. I learned to take written content about complex and detail-oriented theories, synthesize their main points, and then highlight those main points in a concise, visual format (ie. timeline, diagrams, flow charts, etc.). This is different from my traditional method of learning, namely writing papers. I learned that even though my colleagues and I may have a similar understanding of the theory content, the way that we organize it in our minds and then put it into visual format can be very different. I think this is interesting because as practitioners in different settings, we all have an understanding of a specific theory but the way that we apply it in our settings can be unique. I also learned that less is more. Since we did not follow our Miro boards with a “verbal presentation” to elaborate on our designs, we had to make sure that anyone who viewed our Miro board could clearly understand the main points that we were trying to convey. And lastly, I learned the value of frequent and consistent communication and collaboration. My group consisted of four students, all of whom lived in a different states. However, through Zoom and Miro boards, we were all able to look at each individual slide on the Miro board, provide feedback to each other and share tricks and tips that we learned, all in real time. It felt as if we were all sitting around the same table in the same physical room and I felt very connected to my team members. This was a piece that really hit home for me, because for one of the first times in the past year of this pandemic, I actually felt connected to working as a group while on Zoom and using the Miro board. It helped decrease the feeling of isolation as a student.

Implications

In summary, the Miro boards are an effective tool for agile teaching with transparency, helping to foster collaboration while providing opportunities for students to be adaptable. The Miro boards provided the ability to connect either synchronously or asynchronously, both of which were beneficial. This tool also encourages learners to take ownership of their work while building trust from team members. Initial learning was a limitation when using Miro boards but students were quick to learn from each other and similarities were noted in the Miro tools and other technology products. Another limitation was the cost of Miro boards, however they offer educational accounts. Moving forward Miro boards will be used to illustrate multi-step concepts, complete group projects, portfolios,

research projects and to demonstrate the occupational therapy intervention process.

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