

Enhancing creativity understanding in large undergraduate business cohorts: The challenges of including and training facilitators

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Abstract

This paper addresses the challenges facing three stakeholders (namely a creativity consultant; a seminar coordinator; and a student facilitator) when including and training facilitators during a creativity seminar within a large undergraduate business cohort at a French Business School. This study is positioned with the literature on facilitation training within the creativity process. A case study approach is adopted in order to ascertain the perception of the key stakeholders. The findings are outlined and the educational implications are provided to those wishing to organise a similar initiative in their institution.

Introduction

“Sometimes, organisations are not creative simply because employees do not know how to be creative, and/or managers do not know how to lead and motivate employees to contribute creatively towards the organisational goals and objectives” (Tan, 1998: 26). In a context of massification and increased demand for undergraduate management education (Schofer & Meyer, 2005), this paper addresses the important question of the challenges faced by business and management schools when trying to foster creativity understanding in future business managers. Most undergraduate business courses nowadays comprise very large cohorts of students. Given the cost and the effort required to train a large undergraduate business cohort, many universities and schools choose to postpone students’ awareness raising of the creativity process to postgraduate level or to train undergraduates for creativity within their specialisation (Marketing or HRM for example), or as an option or elective module (Xu *et al.*, 2005). Creativity is considered by many to be an essential 21st century competence for business managers and leaders (Robinson, 1999, Colby *et al.*, 2011), the most sought-after trait in leaders today (Kelley & Kelley, 2012), an essential component to succeed and gain sustainable advantage in any industry (Driver, 2001; Anderson *et al.* 2014) and critical to students’ personal and professional development and success (Vance, 2007). However, the authors believe that understanding how to foster and manage creativity within corporate settings is as imperative for future managers in business as developing their own creativity. Managerial support is indeed crucial for creativity to be championed within organisation (Marceau, 2011), and leaders should develop a work context that ultimately enhances the employees’ creativity (Shalley & Gilson, 2004, Anderson *et al.*, 2014), hence, the need to raise awareness among future managers of creativity methods.

In this paper, the authors discuss the results of empirical research on a teaching experience dedicated to enhancing creativity understanding in a large cohort of undergraduate business students, with an aim to encourage such initiatives. The Creativity 'Night' Exercise has been specifically designed as a stand-alone module to address the entire cohort of more than 600 business undergraduate students at a French business school. A previous study of this exercise (Boulocher-Passet, Daly and Sequeira, *forthcoming*) showed that the 2013 Creativity 'Night' Exercise provided the opportunity for the undergraduates to better understand that creativity is a managerial competence that can be trained. This research found a shift in their perception regarding whether everyone is creative; the importance of being creative in one's work; and the importance of creativity in future professional life. Their original representation of creativity being about personal talent linked to artistic endeavours, a gift that a person is born with, evolved towards one of creativity being the result of a process and methods. Thus, by conceptualising creativity understanding within a clear process and methodology, the Creativity 'Night' Exercise prepared future managers to be instrumental in creating an environment that nurtures and promotes creativity in employees who are not naturally predisposed to be creative (Madjar, Oldham and Pratt, 2002). The brainstorming literature suggests the need for trained facilitators in any creativity process. Thus, the Creativity 'Night' Exercise was designed to include two student facilitators within each team of 12 students. However, there are various challenges associated with including trained facilitators when designing a creativity exercise for a large undergraduate business cohort. Therefore, by using a qualitative research approach, the authors intend to highlight the challenges faced by three key stakeholders in the exercise: namely 1) the creativity coach; 2) the seminar coordinator; and 3) the student facilitators. These stakeholder perspectives will critically analyse the choice of training only a part of the cohort of undergraduate students to facilitation techniques.

This paper has been divided into five sections. The first section highlights the need to include trained facilitators within a creativity process as developed in the existing literature on brainstorming. The second section describes the case study that was used to research the challenges of including and training facilitators in a creativity exercise, namely the Creativity 'Night' Exercise, designed as a stand-alone module to address the entire cohort of more than 600 business undergraduate students at a French business school. The exploratory research aims and methods are presented in the third section, followed by findings regarding the challenges as perceived by key stakeholders in the fourth section. Finally, in the discussion section, we outline the educational implications of this study in order to guide those who wish to organise such creativity exercises within their undergraduate business education programmes.

Trained facilitators needed to enhance creativity: a literature review

Brainstorming literature suggests that for teams to reach their creative potential, they will need to have the guidance of a leader who exhibits leadership behaviours that facilitate and cultivate openness, the exchange of ideas, and effective meeting processes (Nijstad & Stroebe, 2006; Paulus & Brown, 2007; Paletz & Schunn, 2010). Research by Paulus and colleagues (Baruah & Paulus, 2009; Paulus & Brown, 2003, 2007; Paulus & Yang, 2000) demonstrates that an effective group ideation process requires appropriate procedures, goals, and context. It is considered that creativity brainstorming is more effective when

process facilitation is employed than when the session is not facilitated at all (Unger *et al.* 2013; Murthy, 2009; Cadwell, 1997). Indeed, many studies show that the use of facilitators within the creativity process can enhance idea generation in groups (Kramer *et al.*, 2001; Offner *et al.* 1996). Offner *et al.* (1996) in particular examined the performance of teams who had a facilitator and those who did not. They found that groups with a facilitator outperformed non-facilitated groups.

Group facilitation is a “process in which a person whose selection is acceptable to all members of the group, is substantively neutral, and has no substantive decision making authority diagnoses and intervenes to help a group on how it identifies and solves problems and makes decisions, to improve group effectiveness” (Schwartz, 2002: 21). Ideally, facilitators should make the rules of brainstorming clear and enforce the rules on everyone. Osborn (1953) defined the role of the group leader or facilitator, as someone responsible for reinforcing the guidelines and encouraging the even participation of all group members as well as identifying a variety of tools and structuring the interaction so that people would maintain their energy and ideas so that the ideas could be recorded quickly and accurately. Indeed, three major challenges to productivity in brainstorming groups have been identified as the emergence of judgments during generation, members giving up on the group, and an inadequate structure of the interaction (Isaksen & Gaulin, 2005). One way to overcome those barriers is the use a trained facilitator to help manage the group interaction. Neutrality and process-orientation seem to be central to group facilitation to ensure group cohesion, manage group dynamics and relationships all the while building commitment from the participants in order to achieve the desired result (Kolb, 2011; Kolb *et al.*, 2008; Webne-Behrman, 2008).

Facilitators should be experts in the process not to interfere with the substantive creation of ideas, as that might lead to a bias. Baruah & Paulus (2008) in their study found that not only the quantity but also the quality of the ideas generated were increased with facilitation training. The reasons for this are many: to avoid participants meandering off task and getting involved in unrelated discussions; to ensure that quieter members of a group can have their voice heard; to critically question and lead conversations and discussions; to encourage and protect all participants within a non-judgmental and comfortable setting. Isaksen & Gaulin (2005), in a study using fluency of ideas as the criterion for effectiveness, demonstrated that the role of a trained group facilitator is central to having a successful brainstorming session and that brainstorming is not likely to have the benefits it was designed to produce without the assistance of a trained facilitator. McFadzean (2002) stressed the need for facilitators to be trained in order to enhance group effectiveness in creative problem solving and outlined the competencies (both general and specific) required by the facilitator depending on group experience and development level. Trained facilitators have been identified as one of the ten cost-effective techniques for enhancing creative teamwork within an organisation: “A trained facilitator can better follow the rules of brainstorming, help to create an organisational memory, and keep teams on track, in terms of making sure that downward norming does not occur” (Thompson, 2003: 105).

If a growing body of literature addresses different approaches to creativity teaching in business education (Snyder, 2003; McIntyre *et al.*, 2003; Zimmerman & Gallagher, 2006; McCorkle *et al.*, 2007; Kerr & Lloyd, 2008; Baker & Baker, 2012), more research is needed in

the area of how to enhance creativity understanding in the undergraduate business classroom. No research has been identified that specifically explores the challenges of including and training facilitators in a creativity exercise. The aim of this paper is to fill this gap by analyzing the perceptions of the three key stakeholders experiencing such an exercise within a large undergraduate cohort at a French business school. Initiating this through the narrative of the Creativity 'Night' Exercise experience, this paper aims (1) to investigate the challenges identified from the creativity coach's perspective; (2) to investigate the challenges identified by the seminar coordinator; and (3) to evaluate the challenges experienced by students participating in the exercise as facilitators. This research is directly useful to educators who wish to run creativity seminars and workshops within higher education institutions and business schools with large undergraduate student cohorts.

The Case Study Context: The Creativity 'Night' Exercise

The Creativity Night has been organised since 2005 as a stand-alone non-accredited mandatory seminar to all undergraduate students at a French Business School (Boulocher-Passet, Daly and Sequeira, *forthcoming*). The objectives of the seminar are to enable students to live a creative experience, to help them understand the importance of creativity as a managerial skill, to enhance student perception of creativity potential, to have students acquire a creativity methodology that is transferable and operational to other managerial settings and to work on a real consultancy-type project commissioned by an external partner. The undergraduate students in question (more than 600) are in the third year of a Bachelors programme, having already completed a 2-year pre-business administration general education or an equivalent 2-year undergraduate education, and prior to continuing a 2-year Masters in Management cycle. The creativity exercise, originally developed by a creativity consultancy (Raison, 2014) within his company Yellow Ideas¹ and designed for mega-storming exercises in corporate settings, was adapted for business school undergraduates.

The 2014 Creativity Night was organised as an induction at the start of the academic year. Two creativity coaches and a team of 102 facilitators run the exercise for a total of 625 business undergraduate students. The students were commissioned by CREDOC² to work on how a student campus can contribute to social innovation.

The seminar was organised as follows:

General Presentation (13:00 – 14:30 and 14:45 – 16:15): All 625 students attended the presentation to explain the principles of creativity, the usefulness of creativity in a business context and specific examples of creative endeavours that became successful products. The two creativity consultants decided to half the cohort to ensure more interactivity when launching the seminar.

Training of Facilitators (16:30 – 18:30): The whole cohort was randomly divided into groups of 12 to 13 students. Two students from each group were asked by the creativity consultants

¹ Yellow Ideas – Website: <http://www.yellowideas.com>

² CREDOC – Centre de recherche pour l'étude et l'observation des conditions de vie (Centre for the Research, Study and Observation of Living Conditions) - <http://www.credoc.fr/>

to volunteer to be trained as group facilitators. 102 students volunteered to train in creativity facilitation and their role was clearly defined by the consultants, i.e. to support, foster and manage the creativity process of their peers within their group during the exercise. The facilitators were explicitly requested to remain external to the idea generation of their group. They had to concentrate exclusively on the creativity process of the group and not get involved in any idea generation, suggestions or recommendations. The facilitators also had to refrain from providing any value judgments on those ideas presented by the participants. Hence, the two principles of facilitation of neutrality and process-focused were respected.

Launch of Creativity 'Night' (19:00 – 19:30): The creativity consultant positioned the relevance of the topic whereas the external partner (CREDOC) presented the theme and its importance to the students.

Creativity Exercise (19:30 – 22:00): Students (in groups of 12/13) worked through the creativity exercise facilitated by two of their peers. The exercise comprised 4 main phases: 1) Introduction to the seminar to include the project, the rules and the timing; 2) Divergence, which included a series of liberation techniques to generate original, distinct and elaborate ideas; 3) Convergence, which involved the logical evaluation and selection of the best ideas; 4) Recommendation Write-up and Presentation, whereby students transformed the idea into a persuasive written and oral presentation.

Deliberation (22:00 – 23:00): A jury (comprising the creativity consultants, external partners, business school faculty and staff, and other invited guests) deliberated on the best ideas while the students attended a concert.

Closure of the Seminar (23:00 – 23:30): The 12 best ideas were selected and pitched to the other students in the auditorium before the three winners were announced. The creativity consultant and external partner appraised and closed the evening.

Research Design

Aim: The objective of this research was not the production of generally applicable research across creativity teaching modules, but to achieve a greater understanding of the challenges of including and training facilitators in a creativity exercise. The aim of this paper was to fill this gap by analysing the perceptions of the three key stakeholders experiencing such an exercise within a large undergraduate cohort at a French business school.

Method: In order to assess those challenges, a case study method was selected as an inductive research strategy (Siggelkow, 2007). A case study, according to Yin (2008), is an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon, wherein the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident and multiple sources of evidence are sought and used. Yin (2008) states that a case study is the correct method by which “how” and “why” questions are asked, and does not require control over behavioural events. The use of case studies is especially applicable to analyse phenomena with real-life context, in the early stages of research, when little is known about the phenomenon with little empirical substantiation (Eisenhardt, 1989). A single case study setting, namely the Creativity ‘Night’ Exercise experience at a French business school presented above, has been

specifically selected to “close in” on real-life situation and to allow the researcher the opportunity “to test views directly in relation to phenomena as they unfold in practice” (Flyvbjerg, 2006: 235). In this study, the case study approach was based upon interviews, the conversational style of the interview (Kvale, 1996) being appropriate in the light of its capacity to produce narratives (Czarniawska, 2004). This is consistent with Bruner's (2004) understanding of narrative as the primary form through which people make sense of, and structure, their experiences. According to Jovchelovitch and Bauer (2000), the narrative approach privileges the experiences of participants and treats their narratives as particular representations of the world. The research consisted of 3 in-depth interviews with key stakeholders in the exercise: the creativity coach, the seminar coordinator, the student facilitator. In respect of sampling, the goal of the study was to involve one of each key stakeholders of the experience. This was not intended as a way of ensuring an ‘objective’ representation of all participants, but as an effort to generate a variety of viewpoints. The interviews were recorded and fully transcribed. Each interview was thus read thoroughly, key themes/categories were identified and a summary based on the key themes was produced to assist the discussions among the three researchers involved in interpretation.

Findings

The challenges of including and training facilitators for the Creativity Night Exercise faced by the creativity coach, the seminar coordinator and the student facilitator are explained below and outlined in Figure 1.

1) Challenges from the creativity coach's perspective

Time and Number Constraints. The creativity coach believed that the main challenge of including and training facilitators for the Creativity Night Exercise with a large undergraduate cohort was the time and number constraints. These constraints were never encountered when training to facilitation within an organizational context: “*we are involved in a scenario with large constraints that represent a clear obstacle*”. Students cannot really be trained to facilitation over a two-hour period in a group of more than one hundred: “*this training is accelerated, there is a compression of all parameters, it's like Formula 1 (...) there are 100 to 110 student participants, when there should be 5 to 8 for facilitation training*”. That is why the training was designed to deal uniquely with the process of the Creativity Night Exercise, and did not provide a proper training to facilitation as this would require much more time: “*in companies, this type of training lasts 3 to 5 days with a maximum of 5 to 8 participants... to do facilitation training in a school ... a basic introduction course is 10 days, 5 modules of 2 days*”. The first thing student facilitators are asked to do is arrange the space so that the student group is close together for more effective interaction: “*if one group of students do not respect these instructions, and if they are among the last teams we visit once facilitation has begun, because we cannot be in 30 places at exactly 19:30, then the team has started working and when they are already in the process, you cannot really stop them*”. Here again the sheer number of students means that you are relying on the facilitators to adhere to the rules of the game to ensure that all groups start at the same time.

Difficult and Frustrating Student Facilitator Role. Another big challenge of including and training facilitators in a creativity exercise from the point of view of the creativity coach is

the difficulty of the role as well as the frustration it causes students who accepted it: *“The job of facilitator is a difficult one, it is the first time in their lives that they are doing this, it is frustrating because other students have fun but they cannot put forward any ideas... and sometimes they have to play the role of policemen... students being policemen... yes, they really worked hard”*. Even if the experience of being in the facilitator position is novel and, using techniques they have never practised before, is a rich one, it is nevertheless a real challenge for the student facilitators: *“we ask them to do a triathlon although they have never swam, ridden a bicycle or run a marathon. And we ask them to do one while leading a team of 10 other students to whom they need to explain how to ride a bike, swim and run the marathon”*. One of the main difficulties identified by the creativity coach is that the majority of team members do not know each other. Teams are constituted randomly by the school administration and the creativity exercise happens at the start of the academic year when many students do not know each other: *“so they have to do the ‘bonding’ although we do not really leave any space in the continuity of the exercise for introducing people”*. The other difficulty lies in the capacity of the student facilitator to understand group dynamics and how to lead a creative session.

Team Composition and Dynamics. Statistically, around 10% of teams will face difficulties to work together. Those difficulties will often be the result of team make-up. *“If you, through bad luck, come across 3 friends who want to have fun and to sabotage the exercise, then you will dance on your head in the evening at 8.00 pm, you will not be able to change anything, unless you make use of some authority”*. Some teams also experience conflicts of leadership, where some students question the role of facilitators and want to take their position or impose another method.

Tedious and Off-putting Process. The training has been designed to deal uniquely with the process of the Creativity Night Exercise, and is not a proper training to facilitation that would require much more time for such a large cohort: *“this means that, during the two hours session, we do only one thing which is looking over the process and steps students will have to follow in the exercise”*. According to the creativity coach, it cannot be fun or entertaining because it is only about details: *“we have around a hundred details to talk about in order to ensure the exercise will work well. Each step is potentially like slipping on a banana skin. We explain essentially how to avoid those problems”*. The creativity coach acknowledges the need for directness and authority when transmitting all these details within the allocated two hour timeframe: *“we have no time for any digression, jokes or any use of humour, even if we try to run this session with the greatest consideration for human interaction, it is just a sprint”*. He confided that this session was extremely hard to run for him, and highlights the thousands of impromptu student questions that suddenly arise because students get worried about how they are going to facilitate.

Facilitator Enrolment. In order for the exercise to go well, the creativity coach invites two students per team to volunteer to become facilitators of the creativity process for that team. This is an extremely delicate exercise for the creativity coach: *“we cannot have too many or too few. So, depending on our arguments, the tone of our voice, our enthusiasm, we have to fine-tune and try and feel the room concerning how many hands are going to be raised in the last 10 minutes of the general presentation (...) We cannot oversell or we risk having unsatisfied students who will not have the chance to facilitate although they wanted it. And*

we cannot undersell either by saying it is a difficult, frustrating role in the group, that you will be the police and will not be able to give your opinion and ideas, as we would not have any volunteers". Thus, when students decide to become a facilitator, they do not really know what the role consists in; facilitators are usually students who are eager and willing to learn more about the facilitation process and to practice it.

2) Challenges from the seminar coordinator's perspective

Time, Numbers and Budget Constraints. The seminar coordinator underlined time constraints due to class scheduling as the biggest challenge of including and training facilitators for the exercise: *"because we organise the Creativity Night Exercise for a very large cohort, the format is imposed on us due to other classes happening during the week and due to the number of rooms needed"*. Indeed, the Creativity Night Exercise can only be organised on a Thursday afternoon and evening, when no classes are planned in the traditional French university system (to the benefit of sports activities), and the only time when all rooms on campus are available: *"this leaves us with only one afternoon from 1pm, when Thursday classes stop, and one evening until midnight, the deadline for the students to be bussed back into town, as our campus is located approximately 20 minutes from the city centre and public transport late at night is sporadic"*. The training of facilitators should last no longer than 2 hours so that they get an opportunity to practice facilitation at least once before the launching of the Creativity Night Exercise. However, the big numbers and budget constraints also impact on choices and organisation of the Creativity Night Exercise: *"even if we could find the space to organise a one-day training session for facilitators, this would nevertheless impact our budget quite a lot as facilitators are numerous and appropriate training necessitates small teams"*.

Damaging Facilitator Frustration. Another big challenge of including and training facilitators in a creativity exercise as viewed by the seminar coordinator is that many students who volunteered to be facilitators were very frustrated after the exercise: *"they were frustrated as they were not allowed to participate in the emergence of ideas. Some students also did not enjoy the training session that they found boring. It is a pity many of them are not satisfied with how it happened, because they tend to convey negative feedback on the overall exercise"*. The seminar coordinator thinks it may be more appropriate to bring facilitators from outside to lead the groups so as to avoid this frustration: *"we could invite students from other schools, even find students who train for facilitation... training our own students to facilitation would be very good, but due to time and budget constraints, we will never be able to give them a proper training to facilitation... I think if our students only saw how the facilitation process helped them have many more ideas, their romantic perception of the creative genius would evolve towards the perception of creativity being the result of a process and methods, even without any of them playing the facilitation role"*.

Pressure Required for Student Motivation. Another challenge the seminar coordinator could identify is the difficulty to motivate the students to respect the facilitation process: *"students' involvement in the facilitation process is inevitably bound to the creativity coach's enthusiasm and power to convince. If we replaced the tedious two-hour process training by, for example, an online tutorial that all students could go through individually, students would not prepare seriously for the facilitation role"*. Students, before they understand the benefits

of facilitation as a process to enhance creativity, need to be constrained to adhere to the process.

Student Motivation of Non-Evaluated Exercise. The Creativity Night Exercise is assessed by a *pass* or *fail* on the student transcript, which depends on their mandatory attendance. It would be extremely difficult to evaluate whether all 625 students had reached the learning outcomes. The same difficulty arises for the student facilitators: *“young students in business schools, the new generation more than previous generations, are very sensitive to showing off their knowledge. We decided to give the student facilitators a diploma for being facilitators of the Creativity Night. The creativity coach sells this well during the first presentation before students volunteer to become facilitators for their team, but this does not seem sufficient to motivate students for the role”*.

3) Challenges from the student facilitator’s perspective

Facilitator Neutrality. The facilitator seemed to understand their facilitation role as well as the expectations of that role, namely to be neutral in the exercise, fix the rules, keep to the timing and encourage the students in a non-judgemental way to ensure the best emergence of creative ideas. However, the student facilitators found it difficult to keep to their role: *“I also participated a little in the choice of decisions; I did not stay outside the project”*. This highlights the difficulty of students of remaining in their facilitation role and not participating in the idea creation and emergence. Indeed, the student facilitator experiences ambivalence between their facilitator role and helping the students to find ideas: *“very often they ask our opinion on a certain point – what do you think, etc. we have this status of being slightly above the other students as we manage the debate a little bit ... they ask our opinion but because we must remain neutral, re-launch the debate and ask the right questions, that is our added value that we bring to the team”*.

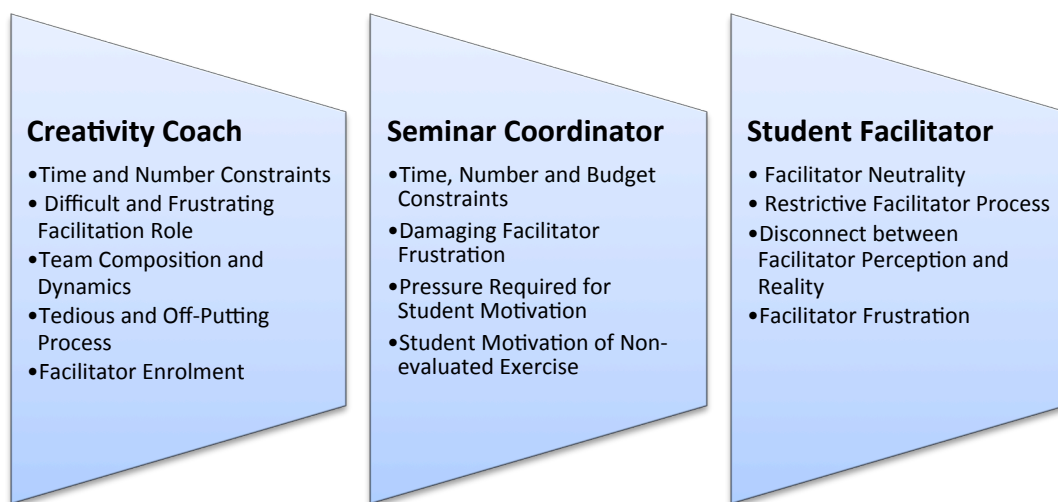
Restrictive Facilitation Process. On the one hand, the facilitator felt that there was a need for a structured facilitation process: *“it is good to have a structure as often we imagine creativity as something that falls from the sky without any structure, but in the end, I found that it was a good thing to have structure because if you followed the protocol as it was presented, you could be really creative”*. On the other hand, the facilitator felt slightly restricted by the structured facilitation process imposed by the creativity coach and found it difficult to express themselves within this structure. When asked about the usefulness of the creativity methodology in the future, the facilitator stated: *“we were not really autonomous with what we were doing because everything was very strict. We didn’t take many initiatives; therefore, I couldn’t really highlight something that came from me”*.

Disconnect between Facilitator Perception and Reality. Initially the facilitator saw the facilitation role as something easy and not very useful but then realised how difficult it is to facilitate students within a creativity exercise. *“it is true that in the beginning, I was really reticent, I said to myself that the role is a little, how do you say, that it not really a role in fact. I didn’t see the real usefulness of this role and afterwards, one realises that it is important to have someone who is always there to frame the debate and ensure that everyone gives their ideas and afterwards, we realise that it is important to have that role”*. Indeed, there seems to be a disconnect between the facilitators perception of what facilitation could be and what

facilitation is in action. This is also linked to the learning by doing nature of facilitation: *“it is in practice that we really learn... what you are taught is that you have to do such and such a thing and it is like that, but it is only by doing it that you learn facilitation, I think”*.

Facilitator Frustration. The facilitator felt that while the training was clear, detailed and well-structured in general, it was a bit long and they felt frustrated because while they were being trained, the other students did not have class: *“I remember that everything was really clear. All our questions were answered. So we knew what we had to do when. The hand-outs were very detailed and we could refer to them during the exercise. Nothing was missing”*. However, the facilitator did not see any other option to this as the facilitation process cannot be improvised and requires a minimum of training on specific facilitation techniques.

Fig. 1 – Stakeholder Challenges of Including and Training Facilitators



Educational Implications

Finally, we would like to offer some advice to faculty members or business schools who may be considering a similar initiative in their institution and who have to deal with the training and including of facilitators in large business undergraduate cohorts. We have outlined advice for the creativity coach and for the seminar coordinator within the business school.

Creativity Coach

The creativity coach must ensure that they offer a dynamic presentation of an abridged methodology that deals specifically with one process of facilitation training. As it is impossible to provide complete facilitation training in the time allotted, it is crucial that a complete methodology is chosen that is sufficiently detailed and clear for the students to understand quickly and exploit in the emergence of ideas. We would suggest that the creativity coach produces an online video support of the facilitation process that could be shown to the facilitators prior to a more formal question and answer session on facilitation. The creativity coach should ensure that key messages are transmitted both in the online support and during the face-to-face interaction with the student facilitators to encapsulate ideas such as “everyone is creative”, “you have got to search for the creative potential in everyone” and “creativity requires a structured process”. It is very important that the coach

who trains the facilitators embodies the creative process and the nature of creativity by his/her actions and pedagogy, hence the need to have dynamic and pertinent instructional supports.

Seminar Coordinator

The seminar coordinator must ensure that this type of seminar is positioned at a pre-Master level (i.e. in the final year of a Bachelor programme) of training as the students require a certain maturity and experience to enact this creativity exercise correctly. Due to the number of students involved in undergraduate education (in our case over 600 students), it is not always possible to provide a complete facilitation training of several days to the students and therefore, the coordinator must opt for abridged facilitation training to involve one process of facilitation. Indeed, it all depends on the purpose of the seminar: if the purpose is to train everyone to facilitation, more time needs to be given over to train all students to facilitation; however, if the purpose is to help students understand and appreciate the importance of the creative process, then fewer students can be trained to facilitation.

Conclusion

This study has outlined the challenges of including and training facilitators to a process of facilitation in order to help students better appreciate creativity understanding within a large cohort of undergraduate business students. The creativity coach who ran the exercise faced 5 main challenges: 1) time and number constraints; 2) student facilitator frustration due to the difficulty of facilitating unknown students with techniques they have just acquired; 3) conflict and dynamics within the teams; the tedious and off-putting process training; and 5) how to enrol 2 facilitators per group of 12/13 participants. The seminar coordinator encountered 4 main challenges namely 1) time, number and budget constraints due to scheduling and timetabling; 2) student frustration due to their lack of involvement in the emergence of ideas; 3) the pressure required to ensure that students adhered to the process; and 4) the difficulty of motivating students without formally evaluating a creativity exercise. The student facilitator also reported 4 major challenges: 1) the difficulty in remaining neutral during the exercise; 2) the restrictive facilitation process that provided no leeway for student initiative; and 4) disconnect between what they thought facilitation was and the reality.

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