

Start-IT: A Collaborative Active Learning Approach to Teaching Soft and Future Skills in Higher Education

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Abstract:

This paper examines student feedback from a project that used a collaborative active learning approach to teach soft and future skills in higher education. The project, named Start-IT, ran over three years. The Start-IT project included three sub-projects, each of which lasted ten days and involved a minimum of 50 students. The three sub-projects took place in Porto, Portugal in 2022; Berlin, Germany in 2023; and Antwerp, Belgium in 2024.

This study analyzes feedback from the students who participated in the Antwerp project that took place in March 2024. The Antwerp project involved 50 students from six EU countries (Germany, Ireland, Finland, Belgium, Poland and Portugal). The students were mainly from Computer Science and Business Studies undergraduate programs, though some students from other disciplines also participated in the project. The 50 students were organized into ten diverse, international, and multidisciplinary teams. The teams were tasked with developing a mobile app prototype, creating a business plan, and devising a marketing strategy, with the restriction that their mobile app prototypes had to relate to the topic of sustainability.

This paper presents students' quantitative and qualitative feedback from the Antwerp Start-IT project. The findings show that engaging in collaborative active learning can enhance university students' soft and future skills.

Keywords:

Collaborative learning, active learning, soft skills, future skills.