

## **Assignment 2: Overview of Collaboration**

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### **1) Comment on the article: “In Defense of Cheating” by Don Norman**

I agree with Norman’s opinions in the section “Mastering grading” and “Restructuring the School System”. His suggestion of changing to modular education with mastery grading sounds to me interesting. But without further speculation, I am not sure if it will really work better.

I hate “grading on a curve”, which is insane in most cases. But sometimes it could come from “grading to absolute standards”, which the author says he favors. Usually the syllabus says:” A: above 90, B: 80-89, etc.” But students will get very low grades for challenging tasks so only a few can reach B. Then the curve shows up, otherwise nobody can get an “A”.

There are lots of disagreements on the part of “Cooperative Versus Individual Work”. The author says our school systems insist on unaided and isolated work. According to my experience, except for exams, I can always ask for help, refer to papers, books and internet for my individual work. My professors simply ask us to mark resources. When I work out something but later find better solutions online, I will just put the better solution and add a reference. Working as a TA, I told students that they can feel free to discuss algorithms even pseudo code and only not to look at others’ programs.

The author casts doubts on the effectiveness of examinations and thinks they don’t encourage understanding. He says to emphasize understanding of the issues and knowledge of how to gain insight and resolution. And then simply mentions “emphasize cooperation” as the solution, which is for me really an arbitrary conclusion – why and how can cooperation help? There are problems paralleled with cooperation as well. What are those problems and how to manage them? Without proof, it seems to me just some random pop-up idea.

Among a variety of collaborations, the article focuses on “copy” phenomenon most of time, while teamwork should have much more contents. And for different curriculum and situation, collaboration should not always apply or should take a different form. At least for the data structure class I am working as a TA, I don’t want anyone to be an organizer and copy code from others.

### **2) Analyze your own educational and working experience**

Collaboration played an important role when I was a senior student in the college. It was an 8-month practice for every architecture student. We worked as a team for several practical

projects. More than half of my graduate studies are related to group work. Because I was in an interdisciplinary program, I had played a part in quite different projects. For sports team, I was a member of 4\*100 meter relay. As an architect, I cooperated with civil, electrical, HVAC engineers and so on.

For work or a project, I barely see the negative aspects of collaborative activities. It is just impossible to finish most work without a team, such as making architectural design – at least in a certain amount of time. Collaboration is necessary for massive tasks which usually require diverse expertise and short period of time. It is like a multi-threaded work so that we need deal with planning, standards, share and reuse information etc. To achieve the goal of collaboration, advanced management plays a very important role.

I am a little negative with the collaboration of a course work in school, which is actually very different from a real work. Students have different expectations and put different weights on a course. If there were a team member who is taking 7 courses, it would be hard to make the schedule work. I have seen several students wanted to be the leader of the group and I have met someone who completely relied on others. I don't think any of these will be a problem for people working in a company.

3) **Have you used computational environments that support collaboration?**

- Local area network
- Wikipedia, Swiki, etc.
- Multiplayer computer games (VR/VE, PS2, Xbox, etc.)
- Multiplayer Online games
- MSN, AOL and Yahoo messenger (I feel they are but not very sure. At least they have group text chat.)