

Individual roles in groups | reflection



‘ Explore and discuss individual roles and function within groups using a reflective model’

This essay will explore, discuss and evaluate individual roles, processes of group formation and function within groups. It will look at reflection and the importance of reflection in paramedic practice. It will reflect on my own experiences during the role I played while participating in a group presentation. It will do this by using Gibbs’ reflective cycle (1988) as a model (Appendix A).

Reid (1993) states that ‘ within healthcare, reflection has been defined as the active process of reviewing, analysing and evaluating experiences, drawing upon theoretical concepts or previous learning, in order to inform future actions’ (Cited in White et al 2005).

In simplistic terms this means to learn from previous experiences and to implement effective positive changes to practice. By doing this the individual will give the patient a better experience. As a result of reflecting upon practice, this will encourage pro active learning and develop autonomous professional and clinical practice (White et al 2005). Gibbs (1988: 09) believes that if an experience is not reflected upon the learning potential will be lost forever. The University of Leeds devised an experiment which supports this statement, ‘ Assessment and Learning in Practice Settings’ (Cited in White et al 2005) (Appendix B). The results of this experiment suggest that reflective practice is a vital skill for future paramedics (White et al 2005). It will enhance personal and professional development, therefore helping you to be constantly learning to excel in your chosen profession.

Adair (1989, cited in Rogerson et al 1996) stated that a group is a gathering of more than two people that are identifiable by a type or name. The group should have the same goals and will need to help each other in order to achieve the reasons that they initially joined. He suggests that there are stages in the formation of groups known as 'group dynamics'. This explains a groups behaviour and progression through four sequential stages; forming, storming, norming and performing (Adair 1989, cited in Rogerson et al 1996) (Appendix C).

By way of practical example I will reflect on a group presentation in which I recently partook. When the group first met we discussed the assignment. At this stage we were in Adair's 'forming stage'. We discussed ideas for the presentation and came up with times we could all meet. Nothing was actually confirmed we all just aired our opinions, no real progression was made during this stage. I do not believe we went through the 'storming stage' as we did not argue over the logistics of the presentation. However we did utilise a democratic decision making process to avoid conflict.

Throughout there was not a particular person who took control, we all got involved as much as each other. If two or more ideas were put forward regarding the same thing, a majorities vote always won. At each meeting we progressed and all had similar ideas to how we wanted the presentation to conclude. We were now at Adair's 'norming stage'. At this point we were all in agreement and communicating effectively, we had group unity. Rogerson et al (1996: 78) says that for a group to succeed a essential component of effective communication is necessary. We were in the 'Performing stage' when we were ready to deliver the presentation on the allocated day. I felt a

little more practice would have made everyone feel more comfortable in their roles and perform better.

Benne and Sheats (1948) identified 26 different ‘group roles’ from their article titled ‘Functional Roles of Group Members’ (Appendix D). They categorised the group roles into three categories; ‘task roles’, ‘personal and social roles’ and ‘dysfunctional or individualistic roles’. During the ‘forming stage’ I believe I was the ‘initiator/contributor’ as I suggested several ways of perusing our goal and in the ‘norming stage’ I was the ‘orienter’. This is because during this stage I pointed out what else was needed to be included that I felt was missing and at each meeting I suggested what we should complete before leaving. The group all had the same goal which helped us to progress quickly and in addition to this we did not have any ‘dysfunctional roles’ being played in our group, e. g. ‘a blocker’ – this type of role disagrees with everything being said and inhibits progression. We all wanted to ensure the task was done. Examples of other members roles are; an ‘encourager’ who praised the group and kept us motivated and we also had ‘elaborator’ – this role builds on other members ideas. This agreement and support was probably due to a shared common goal.

During the formation of groups Hartley and Illingworth (2006) implied that social and emotional effects are often overlooked on individual group members. This was evident when we used the majority rules rule. The thoughts and feelings of the individual/s that were not in the majority whilst voting were not considered. This could cause them to feel inadequate and not worthy of further input. Fujishin (2007: 80) suggests that while decisions are being made fast and therefore saving the group time. This does not

permit commitment from the entire group as they do not fully agree with the route being taken. He suggests that for entire group commitment an alternative method of deciding would be required. I would be sure to fully listen to other people's ideas if I was put in the same predicament, rather than immediately have a vote.

During one of the set meetings there was one student who could not attend, we continued with the meeting without them. This was unfair to the student as we progressed without his thoughts or feelings. But unfair to the group as the deadline wasn't extended due to him being unable to attend and this was a setback to the group as a whole. The next meeting took a long time to get going as we had to take the time to explain what he had missed.

Continuing without the student lost us time when a the meeting could have been rearranged to a time when everyone could have attended.

Listening to individuals ideas and recognising their feelings requires the ability to act upon one's own emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence is to be aware of and in control of the management of your emotions, reactions, goals, intentions, and those of other people and their feelings (Gloeman 1995, cited in Chapman 2012). Cartney and Rouse (2006, cited in Chapman 2012) supported the benefits of taking into consideration the emotional impact on others.

I have learnt that reflection using Gibbs' (1988) model and effective communication plays a crucial part of academic learning, day to day and self learning and progression in practice. Bolton (2001, cited in Blabber 2008: 62) believes thoughts and feeling are brought out of individuals by writing, that

otherwise would not surface. It also facilitates a connection between the classroom and practice that would not otherwise be established (Rolfe et al, cited in Blabber 2008: 62).

This reflection has taught me to ensure that each individual is heard, encouraged and not left out as this will aid progression to the task in hand. As we can see reflection is important during paramedic practice. This widens our knowledge and encourages better practice (White et al 2005). This can help the paramedic to treat each individual patient with their own specific needs. Emotional intelligence which is realising the effects of your own interpersonal skills and attitude also plays a huge part of giving the right patient in the right place the right treatment at the right time. If this was not used in the correct way you could intentionally or unintentionally hurt someone's feelings, resulting in ineffective communication and bad practice. This experience has taught me that camaraderie appears to be a vital component of becoming a successful paramedic. Other theorists also said ' Reflective practice is deemed an essential skill for future practitioners to learn and perform and provides the framework for transferring and applying learning into different practical scenarios' (Fearly, 1999; Duffy, 2009)