

# Theories of group dynamics and group work



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## Current/germinal theories of group dynamics and group work – Decision Making and Communication:

When making decisions and solving problems, effective communication and decision-making skills are essential within a group since all members of the group are better informed, can review and appraise ideas, information, and alternatives through the use of consensus-based principles when making the final decisions (Forsyth 2018; Stanley 2011; Suter et al. 2009).

Effective communication facilitates trust, commitment, and respectful relationships. Effective communication exacerbates conflict if feelings of hate, disgust, and annoyance are verbalized (Suter et al. 2009). Possessing an ability to explain things at the right level for the group to understand are essential for group members to feel safe, to contribute their opinions, and to overcome differences in viewpoints influenced from different values and beliefs (Stanley 2011; Suter et al. 2009). Moreover, it provides a clear opportunity to be heard with respect, to allow for communication that is free-flowing, reflective of the reality of the group's situation, and to harness the information required for effective decision-making (De Dreu & Beersma 2010; Suter et al. 2009).

But not all groups are perfect and not all groups make impeccable decisions. Some groups make irrational decisions, and most groups fall victim to groupthink. Groupthink according to Forsyth (2018) occurs when the group strives for solidarity and cohesiveness to a degree that disagreements are avoided, resulting in defective decision-making processes and the occurrence of suboptimal decisions. The common causes of groupthink

according to Forsyth (2018) include cohesiveness, structural faults of the group (such as isolation and closed leadership styles), and provocational situational factors (such as decisional stress). To avoid groupthink, Forsyth (2018) recommended the following including reducing predeveloped searching of unanimity, rectifying misinterpretations and errors, and developing decisional methods of the group.

In accomplishing effective decision-making and problem-solving, groups require the completion of four important stages. According to Forsyth (2018), the first stage is orientation which involves defining the problem, setting attainable goals, reviewing objectives and missions, organising roles and responsibilities, specifying how the group will work together, setting milestones, and developing an ops strategy approach or processes. This stage is fundamental to constructing improved decisions, efficient problem-solving and reduces unwanted time since all goals and their respective paths to the goals are clarified (Forsyth 2018).

Secondly, the discussion stage involves the collection and gathering of information about the situation. If a decision is warranted, options would be identified, discussed, considered and processed by the group (Forsyth 2018). This stage involves the group analysing ideas, sharing and debating viewpoints, and seeking a shared meaning or a better opinion (Forsyth 2018). The members of these groups individually contribute and share unique information. They critically evaluate ideas or differences in opinions. Moreover, they encourage support, express commitment and time to each other (Forsyth 2018). According to Forsyth (2018) time spent on active

discussion within a group is essential in increasing the quality of the group's decisions.

Thirdly, the decision stage involves the group selecting a solution either through reaching consensus, voting, averaging, delegating or by using other social decision processes such as a social decision scheme (Forsyth 2018). During this phase, the group is dependent on an implicit and explicit social decision strategy to incorporate individual preferences into a more unified decision (Forsyth 2018). The advantages of group decisions according to Stanley (2011) include more diverse views, a shared feeling of responsibility, more complete information, more accuracy and creativity than decisions made by one person. Whereas, the disadvantages of group decisions include more risk-taking, more time organising, delayed or slow actions due to not meeting consensus, and increased arguments leading to conformity (Stanley 2011). However, if a group cannot meet consensus, Stanley (2011) suggested that the Delphi technique should be applied to allow individuals to contribute to the decision-making process since it may reduce the dialogue and conflict between the group. Similarly, Vroom's (2003) normative model of decision making and leadership for determining the decisional procedures of a group across different situations should be utilised since different situations require the use of different decision-making methods including autocratic, consultative (individually or a group), facilitating and delegating (Forsyth 2018).

The last stage is the implementation which involves the group carrying out their decisions into action. Moreover, the implementation stage involves

assessing and evaluating the impact and consequences of the group's decisions (Forsyth 2018).

In summary, it is proposed in several works of literature that creativity, innovation, empowerment, and teamwork is enhanced significantly when communication is open and decision-making is shared (De Dreu & Beersma 2010; Stanley 2011; Suter et al. 2009). Accordingly, effective decision-making and effective communication are essential for competent group dynamics.

## References:

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